

C4 Newsletter No. 4

FFNews 4/05

Editorial

The Millennium Ecosystems Assessment carried out under the auspices of the UN, which issued on the 30th of March, was the work of 1,300 scientists in 95 different countries. It points out that man has contributed more poison and done more damage to the planet than any other, to such an extent that future generations will, at the rate of destruction taking place, pay an environmental debt which will dwarf other crises and reverse the best efforts to eliminate world poverty. "Human activity is putting such a strain on the natural functions of Earth that the ability of the planet's ecosystems to sustain future generations can no longer be taken for granted", the report says. The report says also, "we may have distanced ourselves from nature, but we rely completely on the services it delivers." Deforestation and other changes could increase the risks of malaria and cholera, and open the way for new and so far unknown diseases to emerge. Wetlands, Forests of all kinds, including mangroves, savannahs, estuaries, coastal fisheries, corals and other habitats which recycle air, water and nutrients for all living creatures are all, at the current rates of destruction, being irretrievably damaged. In 1997, a team of biologists and economists tried to put a value on the "business services" provided by nature – the free pollination of crops, the air conditioning provided by wild plants, the recycling of nutrients by the oceans. They came up with an estimate of \$33 trillion, almost twice the global gross national product for that year. The report points out that environmental indicators must be included in every country's national accounting system. Ecosystems are resources as vital as education and health infrastructures. To illustrate the worst-case scenario, looking at a 50-year time scale, the example of the Dominican Republic and Haiti are given. Standing on the border between the two, on the Dominican side one can see a lush, heavily wooded landscape, due to careful conservation and stern actions to stop illegal logging. Haiti, on the other hand is an ecological disaster, with massive soil erosion and deforestation. It is characterized by extreme poverty and societal breakdown.

Derrybrien Environmental Disaster

Work was in progress on the 71 – turbine, 60MW wind power site covering 850 acres of blanket bog, on the summit of Cashlaundrumlahan, one of the main peaks in the Slieve Aughty mountains, located one kilometer above the village of Derrybrien in Co. Galway, Ireland, when, on the 16th of October 2003, 450,000 cubic meters (almost half a million tonnes) of bog began to slide from the base of one of the wind-power turbines, uprooting thousands of trees, continued on east of the village, joining the Owendalulleagh River, and 22 kilometers later poured into Loch Cutra. Over 50,000 fish died as a result.

The Derrybrien Development Co-operative Society and local landowners commissioned a report by Dr. Richard Lindsay and Dr. Olivia Bragg of the University of East London. One of the findings was that by constructing wind-power sites on bogs, developers release huge stores of CO₂. This defeats the original purpose of erecting a windmill farm. It is estimated that the world's peat lands contain over three times the carbon sequestered by the world's tropical rainforests. The study concluded that the Environmental Impact Assessment did not give due recognition to the fact that the site contains or adjoins five Special Areas for Conservation, four Special Protection Areas, two Ramsar Sites and a reference river for the Water Framework Directive. Twenty per cent of the hen harriers, which breed in Ireland, inhabit the site. No proper qualitative or quantitative data were submitted for that or other species of birds. The EIAs did not carry out the required hydrological and stability reports and properly assess the effects of the works proposed on the bog which is water saturated, (98% water). EIAs carried out did not comply with the EIA Council Directive 97/11/EC and were totally inadequate. Irish and EU legislation, such as the requirement for planning permission for deforestation, had been ignored. The Co-operative and local landowners initiated High Court proceedings with a view to stop the clear felling of 650 acres of trees. The injunction is being sought against Saorgus Energy, Coillte and Gort Windfarms. The Derrybrien Landslide Action Group lodged a complaint with the European Commission for the Environment in Brussels. The EU subsequently found in their favour.

Forest of Verbiage

A European Commission document with the title “EU Action Plan for Sustainable Forest Management” is a contender for Britain’s Plain English Campaign’s Golden Bull awards. The document reads as follows:

“A participatory and collaborative approach to policy formulation and implementation is a pre-condition for good governance. There is a need to review and strengthen the consultation structures in forestry at Community and national level, in order to facilitate transparency in decision-making and a structured dialogue with all stakeholders”.

“In providing a reference framework for forest-related policies, initiatives and actions, the EU Forestry Strategy has changed the way forest-related issues are discussed today. However, then changes in the policy context suggest that a more coherent and pro-active approach to governing the union’s forest resources is needed in the future”.

“Such an approach should be based on a shared vision of the EU’s forest sector and the challenges it faces at global, Community and national levels, and on a shared understanding of what forests and forestry can contribute to modern society. It should encompass a set of clear objectives that can provide a basis for regular monitoring and stocktaking, and bring together the thematic, horizontal and cross-sectoral policy initiatives at Community and national level in a structured framework to encourage better and more effective flow of information among the various actors concerned.”

A spokesperson for the Plain English Campaign commented, “There may be something of importance or interest hidden in all this nonsense, but it very well disguised.”

G8 Forestry Initiative

In March 2005, British Development Secretary, Hilary Benn put forward proposals to the G8 states to combat illegal logging in the world's threatened rainforests, whereby member states would insist that all timber bought by official bodies, (i.e. in the case of government procurement policies), would be certified as coming from properly managed forests. Research carried out by various bodies, including the Environmental Investigation Agency in the UK indicate that in some rainforest countries, including Indonesia, governments of themselves cannot prevent, or are complicit with organised crime rings carrying out illegal logging. In Indonesia, the military is heavily involved in logging, corruption and conflict with local people. The idea is that public bodies and other agencies would stop buying illegal timber from producer countries. It will be necessary to establish an internationally credible certification process, as the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) has been proven not to be satisfactory in many instances, for example in the case of certification issued in Ireland. In the case of the FSC it is possible to establish a national certification standard that is fundamentally at variance with its own principles. And there is no proper and credible monitoring by FSC of the process of establishing a national standard, following their issuing of an initial certificate. This has also been proved to be the case in Ireland, where the process is skewed in favor of existing national policy and the forestry industry, and failure to establish a balanced multi-stakeholder approach. The process is designed to marginalize Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations, (ENGOS).

Indonesia's Rainforests

Indonesia has the highest rates of forest destruction in the world, and has more species threatened with extinction than anywhere else in the world, including the orangutan. There has been a 50% fall in the orangutan population in the last ten years. 88% of the wood cut from Indonesia's forests is illegal. At the present rates, most of its ancient forests will be logged by 2010. Up to recently, 50% of UK tropical plywood imports has been from Indonesia's rainforests. In the 1930s, there were three subspecies of tiger in Indonesia. Now only one of these exists and the 500 remaining ones are confined to poorly protected national parks in Sumatra.

The companies involved in illegal logging in Indonesia, have an appalling record including human rights abuses. One of the companies is involved in the filling of lowland rainforest – the last home of the Sumatra orangutan. Another company it is claimed torched its timber concessions to claim compensation from the government. One of the companies under investigation is Korindo. Greenpeace has an ongoing campaign to protect what is left of the world's ancient forests. Their website is <http://www.saveordelete.com/>

West Papua

West Papua, which is seeking independence from Indonesia, is located in the Asia-Pacific region, directly north of Australia. Its forests up to recently were largely untouched. However, the London-based Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) and Indonesia's Telapac has found that timber worth billions of dollars has been illegally felled and exported, to Chinese and western markets. The most sought after wood is merbau, a dark hardwood with a rich grain, popular for flooring. Although Indonesia has laws banning the export of logs, smugglers bribe Indonesian officials and create false papers, indicating that the logs come from Malaysia, to get around Chinese laws banning the import of Indonesian logs. The Indonesian military are believed to be heavily involved. Because only 30% of the military's financing comes from the government, the rest derives from other business, legal and illegal, including illegal logging.

The Philippines

In the Philippines today, less than 6% of the 21m hectares (52m acres) of forest, which existed a hundred years ago, remains. Wholesale environmental devastation in 2004, which followed severe storms, left 1,300 people dead or missing and 500,000 affected.

President Gloria Arroyo banned logging, blaming rampant deforestation for the devastation.
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Arroyo likened illegal loggers to terrorists, drug traffickers and kidnappers. Stiffer penalties were promised for the culprits, including governmental officials and law enforcers, regardless of their ranks, who are aiding and abetting forest destruction. The president promised a thorough investigation, amending legislation to including stiffer

penalties. Professor Blas Tabaranza of the Haribon environmental organization stated that commercial loggers cause more harm than illegal loggers and that such promises were made each time there is a landslide. He added that corruption is part of the culture. Sam Lawson of the Environmental Investigation Agency pointed out that the situation was too far-gone and out of control. So much had been lost and there was no proper reforestation. A massive tree-planting campaign is absolutely necessary.

The Democratic Republic of Congo

The Congo's vast jungles had afforded maximum protection to the primates and other wildlife.

However war has forced both soldiers and civilians into the very heart of the forest, where they survive on bush meat.

The Congo Basin is home to Africa's last great apes. The Congo's great apes, including its chimpanzees, face extinction because of logging and hunting. Adult chimps are sold as bush meat and babies as pets. The "Bushmeat Project", based in the US, has pointed out that at the current rates of extinction, central Africa's remaining wild apes will disappear. In West Africa, the situation is worse. Chimpanzees have been wiped out in Benin, Gambia and Togo, while fewer than 1,000 exist in Senegal and Ghana.

Cameroon

Limbe Wildlife Centre

Wangari Maathai of Kenya wins the Nobel Peace Prize

Wangari Maathai is Kenya's deputy environment minister and the first African woman and the first environmentalist to win the Nobel Peace Prize. She said that sweeping changes were needed to restore a "world of beauty and wonder" by overcoming challenges ranging from aids to climate instability. She is founder of the Green Belt Movement a campaign to plant 30 million trees across Africa. At the ceremony she said, "Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking, so that humanity stops threatening its life-support system". She made a plea for economic justice, equity and ecological integrity, and the encouraging of grassroots citizens' movements. The significance of the winning of the Nobel Peace Prize by Kenyan environmentalist Wangari seems to have been lost on our media, who seemed to be more interested on the TV personalities who turned up for the ceremony than on grasping the moment. Wangari herself put the matter very succinctly when on receiving the prize she said:

"We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds, and in the process heal our own, indeed, to embrace the whole creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder".

Needless to say, politicians seemed to be bemused also. Many commentators in their failing to understand Maathai's message, felt that it might be more appropriate were a human rights activist or a representative of a third world humanitarian organization to receive the prize. When we destroy our environment we destroy a part of ourselves. Maathai said that "The challenge is to restore the home of the tadpoles and give back to our children a world of beauty and wonder", adding that "In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other. That time is now."

Maathai was an eco warrior, just like the eco warriors of the Glen of the Downs, in Co. Wicklow, Ireland. Like them also she was jailed, in her case, for demonstrating against the handover of public land to developers at a forest in northern Nairobi. But in her case the campaign to save the forest was successful. She was beaten and hospitalized for some time for her efforts. She pointed out that in Kenya the Green Belt Movement became a leading advocate of reintroducing multi-party democracy and free and fair elections in Kenya, trying to protect open spaces and forests from unscrupulous developers, who were working hand in hand with politicians. She wrote in the New York Times "The symbiotic relationship between the sustainable management of natural resources and democratic governance is relevant globally".

Maathai said that the environment was a barometer of a nation's health. In answer to critics who said that environmentalism has too little to do with peace to deserve a Nobel Peace prize, she said that "The state of any country's environment is a reflection of the kind of governance in place, and without good governance there can be no peace".

Wolf, Bear, Bison, Lynx, and Boar to return to Scotland

Wolf, European brown bear, Lynx and European Bison are set to roam freely on the 23,000 acre Alladale Estate of Paul Lister, located 40 miles north of Inverness in the Scottish Highlands, containing Caledonian pine forest. Moose and boar may also be introduced. The estate straddles Southerland, Ross and Cromarty. One of the ideas which Forest friends Ireland/Cáirde na Coille have been advocating is the concept of a Great Irish Forest, which could be planned on a similar basis, given the political will and perhaps sufficient environmental 'philanthropy', (if that is not a contradiction in terms), to do so. Perhaps such a forest could straddle the border and act as an environmental link between north and south. Paul Lister is a co-founder of a charity that protects wolves in Romania's Carpathian mountains, home to approximately 5,000 bears, 3,000 wolves and 2,000 lynx. He plans to restore the ancient habitat of Caledonian pine, juniper, hazel and round birch, creating a long-term project that will restore the indigenous Highland flora and fauna of 2,000 years ago. The wolf vanished in 1743, while the European brown bear disappeared in the 10th century.

The Gola Forest in Sierra Leone

The RSPB has signed an agreement to provide management advice and infrastructure to save 293 sq. miles of Africa's rainforest, the Gola Forest in Sierra Leone. The "Upper Guinea" forest once covered an area the size of the UK stretching from Sierra Leone to Ghana. Now, only 20% of this forest remains. Gola is one of the largest portions of this great forest that remains. Under a new agreement, commercial logging will cease. However to enable the forest to operate as a protected area, \$400,000 per year is needed. The RSPB are trying to develop a partnership with the corporate sector, and with other organizations, including Conservation International in Washington. It is anticipated that the Gola Forest would become a national park. Before agreements can be finalized legal issues have to be resolved, such as how the multi-million endowment mentioned above be used to fund local projects in return for the Sierra Leone government losing the fees that would have been paid by commercial foresters.

Amazonia

The Paraná sub-tropical jungle, “Selva Paranaense”, once included more than a million square Kilometers of southern Brazil, Paraguay and northeastern Argentina. It now comprises just 6% of the original forest. The Iguazú National Park, an area of amazing biodiversity, includes the gigantic water falls of the same name, and is located on the border between Argentina and Brazil, has been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The park contains hundreds of species of trees and other exotic plants, birds, (including toucans and parrots), mammals, reptiles, amphibians and insects, including over 200 butterflies. which is about 64,000 hectares in size is not large enough, and species like the jaguar and the harpy eagle are faced with imminent extinction, due mainly to loss of habitat, added to by hunting and illegal trafficking of endangered species. Much of this deforestation has taken place to supply the European market and Ireland imports a greater percentage of hardwoods from the rainforests than any other EU member states.

It is high time that our government changed its policy from the existing monoculture of Sitka Spruce to the growing of our native Irish hardwoods.

Books

“Collapse: How Societies Chose to Fail or Survive” by Professor Jared Diamond of the University of California. Professor Diamond has warned that we are on the brink of irreversible decline unless we tackle a checklist of 12 major environmental problems, and if Ireland and the rest of the developed world fail to address crucial environmental issues, we could become like a “global Somalia” in as short a time as 50 years. Somalia is one of several places in the world where environmental degradation has helped to trigger a collapse of state government and the rule of law. He points out that most of the problems facing the world today – such as deforestation and soil erosion – were similar to those that led to the collapse of societies ranging from the Maya in Mexico, the Easter Islanders and the Norse inhabitants of Greenland.

Bioengineered Trees

Christian Science Monitor, Thursday, March 10, 2005

By Mark Clayton

Transgenic poplars could make China a big player in lumber. But some experts worry about effects on nature.

Scattered across at least seven provinces in China are more than 1 million common poplar trees with an uncommon bite. They can kill the insects that nibble their leaves. Their unusual defensive system is a genetically engineered bomb: *Bacillus thuringiensis*, or Bt, a naturally occurring toxin inserted into the tree's DNA. Other such transgenic species, such as the larch and walnut, are in the works, Chinese researchers report.

Such moves are shaking up the twin worlds of forestry and environmentalism. Transgenic trees are reaching the threshold of commercialization - a point bioengineered crops reached in the 1980s, observers say. This time, though, it's not the United States leading the charge, it's China.

"What the Chinese have done, planting [genetically engineered] trees across hundreds, maybe thousands, of acres, hasn't been done anywhere else in the world," says Yousry El-Kassaby, a forest geneticist at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. "It marks a shift in the center of gravity away from the US, where there's a lot of genetic engineering tree research, but much of it is restricted to the labs or very regulated small field trials."

The case for GE trees seems straightforward. Faster-growing species can produce more lumber and paper in shorter time, which makes them a cheaper raw material. Super tree plantations could also mean less disturbance of natural forests - an environmental plus. Proponents promote the technology as something that can be used to return vanishing species such as the American chestnut to the American landscape, by modifying its genetic makeup to defeat a devastating blight. Scientists can develop faster-growing trees, trees that produce more biomass that can be converted to fuels, and trees that can sequester more carbon from the atmosphere or be used to clean up waste sites.

A problem with pollen

Trees are perennial plants that produce large quantities of pollen released far higher into the air than ordinary crops. This "gene drift" in crops has caused problems as large seed companies have sued US and Canadian farmers for illegally using GE seeds. For example: Pollen from GE conifer trees can blow more than a thousand miles, new research at Duke University shows. Genetically engineered trees will inevitably contaminate non genetically engineered stands of trees." That, in turn, could lead to millions of acres of infertile private timber, possibly lacking enough lignin (a wood-strengthening substance) needed to be saw timber, Ms. Perry says. Combined with internal pesticide production in pine and poplar trees in the wild, it could lead to forests

unable to reproduce, produce food for animals, or create marketable timber.

In the US, at least 69 field-test permits are in effect for three GE tree species - pine, poplar, and walnut. Most of those occupy two acres or less, says the US Department of Agriculture. Under USDA rules, such trees are closely monitored and not permitted to reach the flowering and pollination stage. So far, just one GE variety, a Hawaiian papaya, has been approved to be grown commercially. But commercialization is moving forward. In January 2004, the USDA announced its "intention to update and strengthen" biotechnology regulations for GE organisms, which some say is a key shift. And field research trials for GE trees in the US, including those conducted by ArborGen, a forestry-research firm in Summerville, S.C., have surged since 1997. ArborGen has been approved to conduct dozens of field trials with pine and poplar species genetically engineered for altered fertility, lignin levels, and other features, USDA database records show.

At least two other transgenic tree species, a plum and another papaya, are undergoing USDA review. More than 30 species of GE trees - including 20 species valuable for timber or paper and pulp - are being developed. Hawaiian farmers say the approved GE papaya has already contaminated groves.

In Brazil, researchers have embarked on large-scale research to develop a GE eucalyptus tree. The idea is to make the slow-growing Australian native mature faster and resistant to disease.

Source: The Christian Science Monitor

Africa - Pledge on Forestry Products

The Commission for Africa report recognizes that forests play a critical role in the lives of millions of Africans and that their sustainable management is crucial for the protection of livelihoods, preservation of biodiversity and fighting desertification. African nations have already made political commitments to strengthen capacity to enforce forest law, particularly in relation to illegal logging and the trade in illicit timber and wildlife resources. The commission recommends timber-importing countries should ensure they do not trade in illegally acquired forest products and procure only legally sourced timber and products. It also calls for greater transparency. The following companies, who are some of the largest that own concessions in Africa and import timber have stated their support for the above, and have stated that they will do all they can to meet the demand for legal and sustainable timber and to ensure that Africa benefits fully from its resources. They are also looking to the G8 for the political will to close its markets to illegal timber, and enshrine a requirement for sustainable timber, with legality as a minimum initial requirement, in its public procurement policies. They state that it is only through a partnership between industry, civil society and the governments of Africa and the G8 that the commission's words will become a reality.

The following have subscribed to the above:

Simon Fineman of Timbmet Silverman, Paul de Wagheneire of Bomoco, Olof Freiherr von Gagern of Danzer Group, Ken Walsh of Danzer UK, Marc-Antoine Mallet of Groupe Rougier, Herbert Reef of Reef BV, Robert Hunink of tt Timber Group, and Ad Wesselink of Wijma Kampen BV

Malaysia Rainforests

Malaysia is the third largest exporter of logs after Russia and the US. Malaysian log trading is primarily with China, Japan and India. More than a quarter of a million Malaysians work in the forestry sector. The industry is largely based in the states of Sarawak and Sabah and it is claimed that harvesting of the natural hardwood forests is managed on a sustainable basis. At the end of 2000, the total area of natural rainforest in Malaysia was estimated at 19.84 million hectares or 60% of the total land area. The government has set aside 14 million hectares of permanent forest reserve throughout the country, while 11 million hectares has been designated as production forest and the rest as protected areas with no logging.

The Eighth Malaysia Plan for 2001-2005 aims to reduce the harvesting of natural forests, foster rehabilitation and reforestation of degraded lands, and promote agro-forestry and biodiversity. It is claimed that logging companies, which have come in for harsh criticism from environmentalists, have been cleaning up their act in recent years in response to environmental concerns and customer demand. The Samling Group of Companies, Malaysia's leading timber company, claims to be leading the way in establishing responsible harvesting and reforestation practices, and claim that they are committed to sustainable forest management, <http://www.samling.com.my/>.

SEEING THE WOOD AND THE TREES

This anthology of poetry was compiled to create a love of trees and forests and our environment. It is not a commercial project and any proceeds will be going into the planting of trees, which is part of our ongoing work in Forest Friends. It will help readers to see their environment as the poets see it.

Our poets are the 'keepers of the dream'. Primal cultures are the 'keepers of the earth'. So-called 'civilized' cultures tend to destroy the dreams and the dreamtime and to turn the earth into pocket change. Poets have a gentle way of telling us something, without forcing their ideas and thoughts. The question is who will listen?

Seeing the Wood and the trees costs €10. It is an ideal Christmas gift and a good stocking filler. If you require a copy or copies please contact William Maher at 087 798 7576

<p>Eco Song by The Students of Belcamp College, Coolock, Dublin</p> <p>Forests blaze</p> <p>And deserts grow, In the wind The poison blows Sun is burning in the skies</p> <p>The world was whole You made it bleed A sacrifice To human greed Now it's dying in our arms.</p> <p>Chorus Eco – that's the word Don't say you've never heard Open up your eyes It's time to realize - Eco</p> <p>The world was whole You made it bleed A sacrifice To human greed Now it's dying in our arms</p> <p>We've seen the signs We know the way So stand aside You've had your day The world is ours today.</p>	<p>Chorus/. RAP</p> <p>Hey, gimme your attention, listen to me I'm gonna have to show you If you can't see The world is dyin', and I'm not lyin' And don't patronize me with your sighing</p> <p>Look at what you're doin', Makin' all that waste It's all over the place. There's no space for the human race. Disgrace</p> <p>Your waste is in my face You burn the trees Where the world breathes When air is one thing we all need.</p> <p>We gotta slow The speed we breed Before there's too many people in the world to feed</p> <p>But there's no point in talking to you, 'Cos you're never gonna change The things you do And your time is up, It's runnin' fast, And we're the future You're the past</p>
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The Tsunami

For the first time in history mankind is in the process of creating a catastrophe of much greater proportions than the one we witnessed so dramatically on our television screens on the 26th of December 2004 and subsequent days. It was well known that the huge plates of the earth's crust would fracture with dire consequences. The question was when?

Yet in spite of the fact that science had told us of the dangers and in spite of the fact that the earthquake was in fact registered, the information was not broadcast rapidly and the tragedies, which could have been avoided or dramatically reduced, were not. We live in an age of communication, yet the event was not communicated – why?

Perhaps it is time for ordinary citizens to organize themselves and demand better monitoring and early warning systems so that we do not find ourselves grieving again in the near future in solidarity with our fellow citizens of Asia or elsewhere, be it the people of the Indian, Pacific or the Atlantic oceans.

Why not get your friends to actively participate in non governmental organizations whether humanitarian or environmental and work towards creating a better environment, stop global warming and insist on the communication and early warning systems we have a right to.

As consumers we are now consuming at a rate of about 20% greater than the earth can replenish its resources.

In the case of the tsunami, the coral reefs and mangrove forests which had been destroyed would have greatly lessened the effects of the tsunami, and daily we heard of many survivors who had been saved by trees, many floating on them for days in the ocean. We have to ask ourselves the question, “What are we doing to our earth”? After all it is our environment on loan to us to hold in trust for our children and children's children.

The rainforests, the lungs of the world are fast disappearing – in the Amazon, West Papua, Africa, Malaysia, Indonesia, The Philippines, India, etc. Daily in Ireland we fell trees and hedgerows and create concrete jungles with sanitized parks of minimal open space requirement. While destroying trees, woodlands and clear felling forests we are eliminating the limited biodiversity, which we enjoy in this country. At the same time the Irish Government and the EU promote a forest strategy based mainly on a monoculture mainly of one species, Sitka Spruce. This is done to the neglect of our native trees, which are mainly hardwood, which if we reversed our policy; we would reduce our imports of hardwoods from the rainforests and make a significant contribution of global forest conservation. So it is Forest Friends policy to continue to pressurize the Irish government to change its policy in this regard. In supporting forest friends you are helping to bring about this essential change.

Belcamp College Riparian Woodlands – Dublin Ireland

Forest Friends have joined local residents in their efforts to preserve this unique and ancient urban amenity. Belcamp College and monastery lands, until recently were owned by the Oblate Order and included the historic Belcamp College Monastery, which has now been closed. The monastery contains unique Harry Clarke stained windows. Given the huge population growth in the area, there is no logic to the closure of the school, which appears to be in good condition. The lands reportedly sold for a figure in the region of €105 million. This has been a trend in Dublin and other areas, whereby when religious orders decide to cease operating in an area the lands are auctioned off at market value. Local communities are largely ignored in the process and the lands fall prey to developers who have scant regard to their ecological value. The local authorities also have little interest in this aspect and the environmental impact analysis carried out on behalf of the prospective developers understate the ecological importance of the lands. This is certainly the case with Belcamp.

The lands of Belcamp College are located between the N32 and the Malahide Road, in Dublin. The college grounds are divided in two by the Mayne River, which is the dividing line between Dublin City and Fingal County Council. There are proposals, by Gannon Homes for lands on either side of the Mayne River. The extensive developments proposed are high density and involve lands in both local authority areas. Gannon Homes have already developed the former Santry Woods and are at present building in Donaghmede as part of a development, which will provide for a population of about 40,000.

The areas on both sides of the Mayne River form a unique linear woodland area in the context of North East Dublin and should be afforded the protection of both Local Authorities. The zoning, which has been quoted in the application to Dublin City council of Objective Z 10, is totally inappropriate.

The ecology of this linear woodland river is diverse in terms of trees, (which are at different stages of maturity providing for maximum biodiversity in environmental terms) other flora and fauna, which includes kingfisher, bats, foxes, badgers, and possibly otter. In terms of the conservation of existing diverse wildlife, it important that any development, including roads be kept well away from this “linear forest” wildlife corridor which should be preserved largely intact.

The environmental assessment is regarded as inadequate, misleading and shows little appreciation of the ecology of the area. It appears to be designed to maximize the development potential from the developer’s point of view.

Forest Friends have been approached by a representative of local residents and have agreed to support their objections both at the local authority consideration stage and with regard to any appeals to an Bord Pleanála.

Any development on these lands should be in the context of a master plan for the area. Local Coolock Labour T.D., Tommy Broughan, supports this position. Mr. Broughan has also called for the prosecution of Mr. Gannon following the clearance of a large tract of hedgerow, wildlife and trees along the banks of the Bayne River at Belcamp. This work comes within the definition of development, yet the local authority has failed to take enforcement action.

Bayside Tree Watch

Following the felling of 25 mature trees in Bayside, Sutton, Dublin, Ireland in 2003, members of Forest Friends arranged for publicity in the Northside People, took photos of the tree felling which illustrate that agents of Fingal County Council failed to observe Health and Safety regulations and contacted Trevor Sargent, T.D., who is also a member of Forest Friends. Fingal County Council made it quite clear that they intended to continue with a tree-felling programme in 2004. A petition was organised by local residents and newly elected Green Party councilor, David Healy made representation on behalf of the trees and the residents. The result was that no felling took place in 2004. However, it is felt that the short respite which the trees and the residents have may be short lived. Although deputy Sargent asked the head of Fingal County Council Parks Department to contact Forest Friends, no contact was made. So much for public consultation. It was clear from the correspondence that the chairman of Forest Friends was also a local resident.

It is important that where trees are under threat, that local residents do all in their power, within the law to protect them. It is extraordinary that Local Authorities, who should be protectors of the environment and the trees, can fell mature trees in such a fashion, releasing huge amounts of CO₂ into the environment, when they should be the 'keepers of the trees'

EU audit of Irish Forestry

Forestry has not taken land out of farming

Inflated payments have been made

Investors have claimed farmer's longer term grants

Accountability was lacking, as there are no independent checks.

EU FORESTRY AUDIT QUESTIONS IRISH FUNDING

An EU wide audit of forestry funding has questioned the payments made in Ireland by the Forest Service under the Rural Development Programme 2000 - 2006. The EU Report, published on the Court of Auditor's website, shows that the whole intention of the European objectives to balance environmental and social values with the commercial was circumvented and undermined in order to benefit from the long term - 15 or 20 year - secure payments offered by the European grants.

The EU Report on Ireland, published on the website of (FIE) the Friends of the Irish Environment, shows how Forestry has not taken land out of farming. Inflated payments have been made.

Investors have claimed farmer's longer-term grants

Accountability was lacking, as there are no independent checks.

A spokesman for FIE commented that the 'abuse of the funding means that almost nothing has been done to take agricultural land out of production - or to benefit the environment.'

'The Auditors' report is confirmed by analysis of satellite data by the European Environmental Agency which shows that 83% of recent Irish forestry has been on peatlands. These are valuable areas of biodiversity and release greenhouse gases when cultivated.'

Forestry has not taken land out of farming. Planting has taken place on unproductive uplands and peatlands that did not reduce agricultural production. This undermined the intention of the Commission.

The Audit Report concluded: 'The impact of the measure for afforestation of agricultural land has been low. The degree of afforestation is not significant and the results could be obtained more cheaply.'

Accountability was lacking.

Because of the Irish 'self assessment' procedures which allow large companies and Coillte Teo to assess their own plantations, 'no appropriate assurance could be obtained that all conditions are complied with' and 'appropriate independent checks are lacking'. Every one of the projects audited had 'insufficient justification for planting costs claimed'.

Failure of independent checks

The Irish authorities failed to separate the duties of forestry inspectors.

'Projects are approved and checked by the same person.' 'In some cases, the area of proposed planting was reduced and with it there was a significant reduction in the percentage of broadleaves. These projects 'were not implemented as approved and payment of aid in such circumstances is questionable.'

Further information in Friends of The Irish Environment Newsletter.

PRIME TIME INVESTIGATES GMO CONTROVERSY

Thursday 31 March, 9.30pm, RTE1

Should Ireland accept GMO food and farming? The arguments for and against were aired in a very balanced presentation on Prime Time's investigative report on the GMO controversy.

Included in the live and lively discussion were:

Professor David McConnell, Smurfit Institute of Genetics, TCD; co-chair of the biotech political lobby group EAGLES (European Action on Global Life Sciences), and chair of the Trust which owns the Irish Times.

Dr. Simon Barber: spokesperson, Monsanto Europe. (Monsanto Ireland managing director Dr. Patrick O'Reilly declined to participate). Simon Barber has also worked with the biotech lobby group EuropaBio.

Michael O'Callaghan, Co-ordinator, GM-free Ireland Network; and Chairman, Global Vision Consulting Ltd.

Jeffrey M. Smith, author of the biotech bestseller *Seeds of Deception: exposing corporate and government lies about the safety of genetically engineered food*. He is a member of the US national Genetic Engineering Committee of the Sierra Club, the Steering Committee of the Genetic Engineering Action Network (GEAN), the Advisory Board of the Campaign to Label Genetically Engineered Foods, and is the founding director of the Institute for Responsible Technology.

DEFRA (the UK Department for The Environment, Food And Rural Affairs) was accused today of playing a key role in a spin-doctored cover-up designed to protect the GM industry from the effects of the latest GM contamination scandal. According to GM Free Cymru, the Government Department rushed into print last week to protect the corporate giant Syngenta, within 24 hours of receiving notification of the contamination of maize supplies with the unauthorized variety Bt10.

** The DEFRA statement stresses in several places that the contamination incident was on "an extremely small scale". But GM Free Cymru points out that by using Syngenta's own figures (2) it is clear that around 187,000 tonnes of contaminated maize has entered the food chain, and that unauthorised GM material has been distributed on a massive scale. Some of this material has been exported to Europe, but Syngenta refuses to release details.

** DEFRA and ACRE are in possession of detailed technical data about Bt10 which they have refused, in spite of requests from a number of NGOs, to place in the public domain. This information is not commercially sensitive. We believe that since Bt10 was developed about ten years ago by the Northrup-King Company (later taken over by Syngenta) it has changed its character and may be unstable. If this is

the case, and if Bt10 really is a "failed" variety, DEFRA should be taking steps to protect the public instead of taking steps to protect Syngenta. Speaking for GM Free Cymru, Dr Brian John said: "It is well known that one of DEFRA's policy objectives is the promotion of GM crops and foods against the clearly-expressed wishes of the British public. But in rushing to "damp down" speculation about the extent of Bt10 contamination, and any associated health dangers, it has danced to Syngenta's tune and has failed in its duty of care. Has DEFRA not learned anything from the BSE disaster and the F&M disaster? We may now have maize products on our supermarket shelves that contain antibiotics, and our Government appears to be quite disinterested."

ENDS

Contact: Dr Brian John
Tel 01239-820470 or

Michael O'Callaghan
Co-coordinator

GM-FREE IRELAND NETWORK

MICHAEL O'CALLAGHAN

Chairman

GLOBAL VISION CONSULTING Ltd.

Little Alders,

Knockrath, Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow

Ireland

tel: + 353 404 43 885

fax: + 353 404 43 887

mobile: + 353 87 799 4761

email: moc@global-vision.org

email: mail@gmfreeireland.org

website: www.gmfreeireland.org

Woodland League Public Meeting.

Friday, 4th March 2005. Glenstal Abbey, Glenstal, Murroe, Co. Limerick.

Ballyclough Wood

Ballyclough was the only old growth wood in the area. It was to be surveyed as the most important epi-centre of SACs in the Limerick region. It was the single most important genetic reservoir of seed stock to serve the whole area's biodiversity. The community have lost an extremely valuable resource. Unfortunately, this has been happening far too regularly and must stop (another example: with the landslides in Derrybrien, where three SACs were lost). Ballyclough consisted of 70 acres of Wild Cherry, Oak, Birch, Ash and Hazel, and was home to the Red Squirrel and numerous Bat species. Natural native woodlands, via the management of water, soil, air, etc, confer stability. Ballyclough was bulldozed and all of its timber (i.e. the evidence) was burned on site. The EPA were alerted about the smog from the illegal fires, but stated that they did not have the personnel to investigate. The heritage officer, the environment officer, the forest service inspector, the wild-life ranger and finally the Garda Síochána were all notified of the impending devastation, some up to 10 months prior to the burning. There was no felling license and no burning license issued, and it would appear that the environment (namely the native woodlands) has no value to the state, despite the 1946 Forestry Act which states that *"any tree over 10 years, not near a homestead, is protected by law"*, and not to mention the Wildlife Act 1976, the Rio Agreement 1992, Helsinki 1998, Kyoto and Lisbon!

Following from Rio, in 1993 the convention on biological diversity (and our state is a signatory) concluded that there is no more valuable habitat for sustaining biodiversity than native woodlands. They are the lynchpin for sustainable development. As a result of this piece from Ted Cook, and from further discussion at the meeting about what happened in Ballyclough, the Woodland League agreed to call attention to what happened at Ballyclough and the broader issues it signifies, through the media. The Woodland League agreed to contact the Minister for Justice as to why there is blatant disregard for environmental law at local, national and international level.

(Extract from the minutes of the Woodland League Meeting of Friday, 4th March 2005. Glenstal Abbey, Glenstal, Murroe, Co. Limerick.).

Forest Friends Accessories

Forest Friends have a limited number of accessories available for purchase. They include the following:

	Price/€
Carrier bag/printed with forest friends details	7
Biro/silver finish printed with logo and website number	7
T-shirts	12
“Seeing the Wood and the Trees” poetry book	10

If you wish to place an order for any of the above please contact any member of our committee. Any revenue from sales will be used to fund our tree planting projects.

Forest Friends Committee:

William Maher – Treasurer/Secretary wjmaher@iol.ie
087 798 7576 lomeachair@hotmail.com

John Haughton – Chairman, Ph. 01 8325415 jjhaughton@gmail.com

Bernie Magee - Committee member 087 950 3261 pbmagee5@eircom.ie

Paddy Magee - Committee member 01 8376402 pbmagee5@eircom.ie

Akeem Alabi - Committee member brothera1@hotmail.com 0857354808

Declan Dalton - Committee member 087 995 7277 declandalton@hotmail.com

Joseph Dunne - Training Officer 087 649 0573 greinefraoch@hotmail.com

Carol Jordan - Storyteller greinefraoch@hotmail.com

Useful Websites

Forests Websites:

<http://www.forestfriends.ie/> or <http://www.cairdenacoille.org/> This is the Forest Friends/Cáirde na Coille web site.

<http://www.celtnet.org/> County Clare, Ireland, based environmental organization established to promote, support and encourage the concepts of Conservation, Ecological diversity, sustainable and natural living through training, and awareness-raising events and schools programmes.

<http://www.woodlandleague.org/> Website under construction. The Woodland League is an Irish based organization which is dedicated to restoring the relationship between people and their native woodlands.

<http://www.ramsar.org/> Deals with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

<http://www.biodiv.org/> Convention on Biological Diversity

<http://www.fao.org/> food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations

<http://www.cites.org/> Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

<http://www.iucn.org/> International Union for the Conservation of Nature

<http://www.unccd.int/> United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

<http://www.basel.int/> Secretariat of the Basel Convention; United Nations Environment Programme

<http://www.cms.int/> Convention on Migratory Species

<http://www.unep.org/> United Nations Environment Programme

<http://www.gefweb.org/> Global Environment Facility

Climate Change Websites:

<http://www.phenology.org.uk/> This site is a result of joint project of the Woodland Trust, UK and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology

<http://www.ace.mmu.ac.uk/eae> The main topics covered include, acid rain, climate change and ozone depletion.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/hottopics/climatechange/greenhouseeffect.shtml>

<http://www.biodiversityhotspots.org/> This site of Conservation International gives information on 25 of the most fragile areas in the world.

<http://www.metoffice.com/> Gives up-to-date information on climate change.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Forest Friends Ireland, P.O. Box 7814, Dublin 1. Ireland

FEES: Individual...€ 30 Family...€ 60 Schools...€ 6 Student
/Unwaged/Senior Citizen...€ 15 (Please Tick)

NAME:
ADDRESS:
TELEPHONE:
EMAIL:

METHODS OF PAYMENT

CHEQUE/POSTAL ORDER

For the appropriate amount made payable to “**Forest Friends Ireland**” at the above address /**or**

BANKER’S ORDER

I/We authorize you to payannual payments of € ,commencing on the
Day.....Month.....Year.....

To the account of:

Forest Friends Ireland Ltd.

Bank of Ireland

2 College Green

Dublin 2

Account no: 33721955

Sort Code: 900017

To the Manager (your bank)

Bank’s Postal Address

Name of Account

Account Number

Date

Signature(s)

Please return to: Forest Friends Ireland, P.O. Box 7814, Dublin 1. Ireland

Further information at www.cairdenacoille.org

Telephone: 353 01 8325415

jjhaughton@gmail.com or wjmaher@iol.ie

Forest Friends Ireland, P.O. Box 7814, Dublin 1. Ireland

Petition to Minister Mary Coughlan

To Minister Mary Coughlan
Minister for Agriculture
Dáil Éireann, Kildare St., Dublin.

Dear Minister, I wish to support the following campaigns of Forest Friends/Cáirde na Coille:

1. To reverse the present Irish Government's forestry policy of planting mainly a monoculture of Sitka Spruce in favor of planting Irish native trees. This is justifiable on economic, environmental and social equity bases. It is the only forestry strategy which is sustainable in the context of a national biodiversity approach based on the principles enunciated at the Earth Summit Conference in Rio in 1992:
2. To ensure that the forests of the Irish People, (at present managed by Coillte) are not privatized. This would be contrary to the national interest, to the principles of conservation and would create serious problems of public assess, such as are at present enjoyed by the people of Ireland.

Name.....

Signature.....

Address.....

Phone no.....

NB Please cut out and send the above request to Minister Mary Coughlan, Dail Eireann, Kildare Street, Dublin



FOREST FRIENDS – A GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP

Because we have not sought sponsorships, which could compromise our forestry ethos, we are largely dependent on member's subscriptions. For this reason, we are requesting existing members to try to recruit a friend, or to give a gift of membership to a friend, as a Christmas gift. In return, we will give you a copy of our poetry book, "Seeing the Wood and the Trees", or a Forest Friends t-shirt, or FF carrier bag, or specially printed FF high quality biro. To date we have planted thousands of trees and this will enable us to continue with our tree planting programmes.

NB PLEASE SEND A COPY OF THE FOLLOWING LETTER OR SIMILAR

Letter to
John Fitzgerald, Manager,
Dublin City Council,
Civic Offices, Wood Quay,
Dublin.

Dear Manager,

Forest Friends Ireland/Cáirde na Coille, are very concerned that the proposed felling of the remaining London Plane trees in O'Connell Street would be interpreted as putting the environmental aspects of our premier street in a very secondary place. These mature trees are now part of the heritage and history of the street and are a very strong statement as to the role, which trees play in countering the CO2 emissions from the burning of fossil fuels. Leaving the remaining trees central to the architecture of the street, rather than relegating trees to the margins of the streets, would be an important statement as to the value which the City Council places on their role and would be rightly interpreted as indicative as to the attitude of the council towards environmental conservation in the city in general.

We therefore request you, as manager of Dublin city, to revisit the issue and to follow the wishes of our elected representatives and the Right Honorable the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor Michael Conaghan, in this regard.

Name.....

Address.....

Signature.....Date.....