

Clare PPN Representative Report from Clare Biodiversity/Heritage Forum on 28th July 2023

Andrew St Ledger (ASL) attended this meeting on behalf of Clare PPN held in the Clare County Council offices.

ASL suggested that a TOR (Terms of Reference) is created for the forum that references the Legally binding United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity where the definition of Biodiversity comes from to guide and inform the forum. To avoid greenwashing and dilution of what Biodiversity actually means.

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/biological-diversity-day/convention>

After some discussion it was agreed to include a reference to the CBD but no need for a full TOR as the group is acting on good will and is not a policymaking body etc.

ASL asked that the Precautionary United Nations Principle of Sustainable Development be adopted by the forum regarding decisionmaking.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/earth-and-planetary-sciences/precautionary-principle>

In a general discussion around Locally based initiatives and opportunities in Clare for Biodiversity protection, enhancement and conservation ASL suggested, The Woodland League Great Forest of Aughty restoration project via riparian native woodland corridors/shelterbelts and expanded hedgerows creating an ecologically connected matrix across farmlands etc and the CELT Landscapes Partnerships be looked at and supported.

ASL also gave examples of related problems regarding the provenance and origin of native trees, eg Coillte are sending out native tree seeds to dutch tree nurseries, where ash dieback came from to grow into saplings which are then being imported back to Ireland putting our native trees at further risk to pests and diseases. The current EU rules allow the origin of plants to be altered after plants have spent only one year in a nursery.

<https://www.nivemnic.us/?p=3039>

Many of the wild seed mixes for Biodiversity/Pollinator projects that were used by schools, companies, and tidy towns/community groups did not contain native flower mixes at all, putting our native species at risk.

Due to the demand for bee pollinating plants for farms under ACRES etc, there are not enough plants in Ireland so cuttings are being sent to New Zealand for grafting to NZ root stock, these will be imported back as saplings further jeopardising our native plant resources.

Clare Biodiversity/Heritage Forum and all other county forums need to be aware of these issues and must ensure that there are genuine native plants and trees utilised in county Biodiversity plans/projects. Ideally native tree seeds should be collected within 10 miles of place where they

are known to be adapted and this should involve council native tree/plant nurseries being created and support for local community native tree/plant nurseries growing stock for local projects.

ASL highlighted the cross over between Cultural and Natural heritage, which the CBD references particularly relating to languages, which contain old information about traditional sustainable land management, and what we now call Biodiversity etc, the importance of lore and storytelling, townland names, sacred trees, etc. Councillors have the power for TPO's, Tree preservation orders, yet there are very few in the County let alone the country as a whole. ASL proposed following up on the excellent Trees of Clare survey to inform new TPO potential designations.

On that note ASL highlighted the closing off of public access to the 1000 year old Brian Boru oak tree in Tuamgraney which has no protection in law and proposed that the Council contact the land owners to investigate taking on the management of the site which is a living national monument, for future public access. Magh Adair the ancient inauguration site of the O'Briens is another heritage site that is much neglected and does not have easy access to the Public could also be looked at in the Council plan with a view to future management agreement with the land owner.

ASL asked about a dispute resolution mechanism in the event of a dispute within the forum, response was we are working on non statutory plans which are not legally binding so this should not arise.

The Chair agreed to accept inputs to strengthen and guide the work of the Forum going forward and that they would capture as much of these inputs in the minutes as well as seeking fresh inputs before finalising those minutes.

Regards,  
Andrew St Ledger