

Irish Landscape Timeline 1963-2022 – Planning & Landscape

Prepared by Terry O'Regan, Landscape Alliance Ireland in July 2022

This particular timeline is intended to illustrate how the concept of landscape was integrated into planning and development legislation in Ireland over the period 1963 to date. Links to parallel processes elsewhere in Europe are included.

An awareness of and an innate human desire to achieve a harmonious relationship with the natural and cultural landscape on the island of Ireland has evolved over millennia in parallel with the evolution of civil society and good governance in Europe and elsewhere. This civil vision has now been legally articulated in the European Landscape Convention.

The people of this island some 5000 years ago first demonstrated a deep relationship with landscape, a relationship that continued for millennia. Over the most recent millennium this relationship became progressively more tangled as the shapers of the cultural landscape were perceived as an 'alien invasive species', over the past 100 years we have had to grapple with the resulting estrangement.

The recent Irish landscape timeline illustrates how we initially followed international trends, but were slow to participate actively in the accelerated progression between 1987 and 2014, it had been hoped that the publication of the National Landscape Strategy in 2015 would mark an important responsible turning point. As of January 2022 the NLS would appear to be stalled and may even have lost its way.

1963 – Ireland's first Planning & Development Act

1964 - Establishment of An Foras Forbartha – the Development Institute

1966 – Michael Dower (co-author of ELC in the 1990's) working on landscape & tourism pilot project in County Donegal (Neil Blaney was Minister for Environment)

1976 – Ireland's Wildlife Act

1977 - The Inventory of Outstanding Landscapes published by An Foras Forbartha

1979 - EU Birds Directive

1985 - Granada Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe

1985 - EU EIA Directive (85/337/EEC) – required members to undertake environmental assessment of certain individual projects and, followed by amending Directives in 1997, 2003 and 2009.

1987 - An Foras Forbartha abolished by the then Minister for Environment, Pdraig Flynn.

1988 – Original Heritage Council established by Charles J Haughey

1989 - EU EIA directive came into force in Ireland

1990 - The National Trust's seminal conference 'Europe preserved for Europe' subsequently four bodies – Landscape Research Group, The European Federation of National & Nature Parks [now Europarc] and ECOVAST [European Council of Villages & Small Towns] conceived the idea of a Convention for the Protection of Europe's Rural Landscapes.

1992 - conference 'Landscapes in a New Europe: Unity & Diversity' in Blois, on the River Loire in central France courtesy of Landscape Research Group and Paysage et Aménagement, where Adrian Philips of IUCN outlined the reasons for and scope of such a landscape convention. Subsequently Adrian and Michael Dower (Countryside Commission) approached the Council of Europe on the matter

1992 - Mediterranean Landscape Charter created by certain regions in Spain, France and Italy was approved.

1992 – EU Habitats Directive > Natura 2000 Network

1992 - Valetta Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Revised)

1992 – Irish Environmental Protection Agency established under the Environmental Protection Act – without a brief with regard to landscape.

1994 – January - Terry O'Regan first proposed a National Landscape Policy in Ireland in published letter

1995 – January - 'The Case for a National Landscape Policy' published by Terry O'Regan – the 1st call for a National Landscape Policy in Ireland

1995 – 'Europe's Environment – the Dobřis Assessment' was published featuring a chapter on Europe's landscapes.

1995 – Conference organised by Congress of Local & Regional Authorities within the Council of Europe led to the setting up of a working group to prepare a European Landscape Charter or Convention. Michael Dower and Yves Luginbuhl of France prepared the first non-legal draft of the convention. Riccardo Priore was secretary to the group.

1995 – 1st Irish National Landscape Forum convened in UCD, Dublin - followed by a series of National Landscape Forums - '96 (UCD), '97

(Maynooth), '98 (Maynooth), '99 (Maynooth), '01 (Fota, Cork), '03 (Firkin Crane, Cork), '05 (City Hall, Cork), '15 (Botanic Gardens, Dublin), '16 (UCC, Cork), '17 (Leixlip, Co. Laois) & '18 (Killaloe, Co. Clare)

1995 – Heritage Act – established Heritage Council on a statutory basis and contained a definition of Landscape: “landscape” includes areas, sites, vistas and features of significant scenic, archaeological, geological, historical, ecological or other scientific interest. The functions of the Heritage Council were “to propose policies and priorities for the identification, protection, preservation and enhancement of the national heritage, including monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens and parks and inland waterways”.

1997 – The 1st Interdepartmental committee meeting on Landscape Policy instigated by LAI met under the chairmanship of Jimmy Deenihan, Minister for Horticulture

1998 - The draft European Landscape Convention was consulted between ministerial representatives, international and non-governmental organisations during the CLRAE consultation conference held in Florence from 2 to 4 April 1998, after which the final draft was prepared. Ireland was represented by DoE and LAI.

1998 – Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice on Environmental Matters

1999 – The European Spatial Development Perspective document was approved by the informal Council of Spatial Ministers of the EU in Potsdam.

1999 – Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act – Ireland

1999 – October - Heritage Council Landscape Conference ‘Towards Policies & Priorities for the Irish Landscape’

2000 – Planning & Development Act 2000 – Ireland – incorporating provision for landscape conservation areas

2000 - The Draft Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines issued for consultation - Ireland – but never revised despite serious flaws

2000 – October 20 – the Florence European Landscape Convention opened for signature.

2000 – 1st November – SI 349 f 2000 Part IX Strategic Development Zones

2001 - EU SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) – required members to undertake environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes

- 2002** – Ireland signed and ratified the European Landscape Convention without public discussion or debate.
- 2002** – Irish National Heritage Plan
- 2002** – Ireland’s National Spatial Strategy (2002 – 2020)
- 2002** – ‘Action on Architecture’ 2002 – 2005 – Irish Government Policy document
- 2004** – On March 1 the European Landscape Convention came into effect for Ireland and at least 9 other states.
- 2004** – EU SEA directive came into force in Ireland
- 2004** – Wildlife (Amendment) Act – Ireland
- 2005 – European Landscape Character Assessment Initiative final report published – Landscape Alliance Ireland (T O’Regan & C. Buchanan) participated in the project – Wascher D.M. (ed). 2005. European Landscape Character Areas – typologies, cartography and indicators for the assessment of sustainable landscapes. Final Project Report.
- 2005** - Faro Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society
- 2005** – 3rd Meeting of Workshops for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention met in Cork Ireland
- 2006** – Planning & Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006
- 2007** – Irish National Climate Change Strategy (2007 – 2012)
- 2008** – 29 April National Landscape Strategy process initiated by the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government at joint inaugural meeting of Steering Group & Consultative Panel.
- 2009** – Government Policy on Architecture 2009 – 2015: “Towards a Sustainable Future: Delivering Quality within the Built Environment”
- 2009** – September - Heritage Council Landscape launches multidisciplinary CPD Training workshop – ‘An introduction to Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)’ – pilot project for further workshops over following years
- 2009** – October - Heritage Council Landscape Conference ‘Looking around – Looking ahead’
- 2010** – Planning & Development Act (Revised) enacted – incorporating the ELC definition of landscape.
- 2011** - codified EU EIA Directive (Directive 2011/92/EU) adopted by members

2010 – Heritage Council publishes ‘Proposals for Ireland’s Landscapes 2010’ – its position paper on a National Landscape Strategy for Ireland.

2011 – September – Jimmy Deenihan, Minister for Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht launches a 2 month public consultation process on a Strategy Issues paper on the proposed National Landscape Strategy for Ireland.

2011 – October – Colloquium on the National Landscape Strategy convened by the Irish Landscape Institute/URBAN FORUM

2013 – Ireland’s National Spatial Strategy (2002 – 2020) scrapped and a new policy to be prepared

2014 – 1st July - Irish National Landscape Strategy adopted by government

2014 - Directive 2014/52/EU amends the 2011 codified Directive but does not replace it. It does however provide more clarity with regard to landscape and specifically references the CoE Florence European Landscape Convention 2000.

2015 – May - Irish National Landscape Strategy formally launched by government. Progress was made implementing the NLS over the period 2015-2017, but it has stalled since then and may even have lost its way?

2021 – Planning and Development (amendment) (Large Scale Residential Development) Bill 2021 working its way through both houses of the Oireachtas

2021 – Land Use Review process commenced by EPA – an action committed to in the Programme for Government: our Shared Future intended to assist in the delivery of the promised reduction in greenhouse gases by 51% over the 2021-2030 timeframe

To date 40 states have signed and ratified the European Landscape Convention, 1 has signed and has yet to ratify and 6 states have yet to sign or ratify, including Germany which unfortunately is significant as this may frustrate the hope that the EU will fully accede to the convention.

The convention was from the beginning active at an international level with a majority of those members engaged with the development of the ELC by the mid 1990’s and it continues to be one of the most active of all the CoE 176+ treaties, with a high level of interest and participation by the majority of member states in the Council of Europe’s programme of conferences, workshops and working groups.

Ireland initially was one of a minority of states not actively engaged at official level. Acting on behalf of LAI and assisted by the Heritage Council Terry

O'Regan was effectively the consistent unofficial Irish representative from the conference in Florence, Italy in 1998 until the 8th Workshop in Malmo Sweden in 2009.

The convention is now more than international in a European sense as it is becoming international in a worldwide sense as recent workshops have featured delegates and speakers from the US, Australia, China, South America etc. There is now a vast body of work, skills and experience available internationally on good landscape management, policy, strategy and instruments including the proceedings and publications that can be accessed on the CoE web site.

Ireland is a long way behind at official level, but as a society we have a close attachment to place that has not always been articulated in landscape language. The 2015 National Landscape Strategy began the process of providing the structure and focus point for an integrated approach to managing our landscape within the spirit and intent of the European Landscape Convention. It initially drifted into a landscape characterisation mapping morass and has since effectively lost its impetus.

Even worse, it would appear that those currently charged with advancing the NLS are wearing 'heritage blinkers' - apparently perceiving the NLS to be a subset of a National Heritage Plan or landscape merely a subset of heritage. It may be difficult to grasp but heritage is in fact a subset of a holistic 'deep' landscape as envisaged in the European Landscape Convention. This landscape conception could be the great integration protector of heritage as well as so many more 'land layers' that together combine to deliver our landscape.

In January 2022 it is difficult to see a way forward, but if Ireland is to sustainably meet its ELC and EU Directive obligations and now its Climate Change challenges a way must be found to move landscape onto a different and much more urgent progressive and integrated agenda.■

This particular timeline is derived from the original landscape timeline that featured in a paper presented by Terry O'Regan at a Colloquium on the then proposed National Landscape Strategy convened by the Irish Landscape Institute/URBAN FORUM on October 11th 2011 at RIAI, 8 Merrion Square, Dublin 2

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