

The Green Voice

**October 1999
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**Newsletter published
by the Green Party/
Comhaontas Glas**

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Global Warming Kyoto and beyond

By Cllr Ciaran Cuffe

Massive hurricanes and plagues of killer mosquitoes are often referred to in the discussion of global warming, but the implications in the medium term for Ireland are rarely mentioned. It seems clear that low-lying countries such as Bangladesh would be devastated by a small sea-level rise, but Ireland's climate and economy could also be badly affected by global warming. Cloudier summers and higher rainfall are likely in Ireland, with implications for changes in the farming sector. Changes in the Gulf Stream could damage the fishing industry. A more pessimistic scenario could involve icebergs drifting down from Scandinavia, and a foggy climate similar to Newfoundland taking over the country.

Air Temperatures

Global warming refers to the increase in air temperatures around the planet caused by human activity over the last century. The planet is surrounded by a protective layer of gases that form a blanket allowing humanity to survive on Earth's surface. Industrialisation has led to greater emissions of key greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxides, and this has made the blanket 'thicker'. Activities such as cutting down forests; raising large cattle herds, and even driving down to the shops for the paper all contribute to increasing emissions, and it seems that atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide will double from pre-industrial levels during the 21st century.

Under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change agreed in Kyoto in 1997, Ireland agreed to restrict emissions to an increase of 13% above 1990 levels by 2008 - 2012. Our unprecedented economic growth in

recent years has meant that we have massively exceeded these targets already. Many reports are being written on how best to meet our responsibilities, but it is clear that early action is essential, if we are to play our part in honouring the agreement. Given that we were among the few countries that were allowed to increase our emissions, there is a moral imperative on Ireland not to exceed the generous targets that we were permitted. However, Ireland has scored badly in several crucial areas. The Government promised to plant larger areas of forestry to act as a 'sink' for carbon dioxide emissions, but we have fallen behind in reaching targets. It also stated that there would be massive improvements in public transport, to attract people out of their cars, but haggling over whether to place Luas underground or overground has meant years of delays in a system that should have opened this year. New roads have spawned more traffic which gives rise to more greenhouse gas emissions.

Public Transport

Looking ahead, it's important to look at where real improvements could be made in reducing our contribution to global warming. So far, little has been achieved, despite the weight of reports published by Government departments. A better public transport system would mean less cars on the road. Replacing the Moneypoint coal-fired power station with a combined cycle gas-fired power plant would yield large benefits in the power sector, but so far the government appears to have concentrated on the issue of deregulation within the industry. Instead of giving passive support for green fuels, there should be a mandatory procurement of electricity from sources such as

Continued from page 1

wind turbines, bio-mass, and small hydro-electric plants. Changing from oil to gas central heating can reduce greenhouse gas emissions at home. High tech heating controls which measure and anticipate outside and inside temperatures can reduce household heating bills. Ensuring that the attic has a thick layer of fibreglass insulation, and that the hot water cylinder has a lagging jacket is essential. Choosing an energy efficient fridge or washing machine, and not using the 'boil-wash' option can reduce energy demand, and emissions.

In the agricultural sector, a recent report from the Department of the Environment referred rather delicately to the problem of 'enteric fermentation from ruminant animals'. Put simply, flatulent cows are a problem. Changes in feed practices, and a shift away from livestock to tillage would reduce emissions. A tax on fertiliser, rather than a subsidy would also help to meet the Kyoto targets. More tree-planting can help absorb carbon dioxide gases

Transport emissions have soared over the last ten years, and the car is the main culprit. Instead of encouraging commuters to drive longer and longer distances to work in our cities and towns, we need to promote more sustainable practices. The recent Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Dublin Area are a step towards achieving this. Strong land use and planning policies encouraging people to live in well-planned towns instead of commuting by car are required. Planning for family life in cities with parks, playgrounds and affordable housing readily available will discourage the shift to commuting from rural areas. Cycling and walking mean lower emissions. Providing tax breaks for low emission vehicles such as the innovative two person Swatch/ Mercedes car would reduce CO2 gases. If people are facing the long commute, providing decent rail services, such as re-opening Navan-Dublin and Tuam-Galway rail links would help Ireland to reach target levels set at Kyoto. Road pricing and the use of green taxes such as a penny per litre petrol tax could be used to subsidise public transport services.

Ireland has scored badly in our efforts to reach the targets established by the UN at Kyoto. To be fair, many other countries have also failed to make the grade. Instead of commissioning more reports the Government should act on the advice it has already received. Ireland should lead the way as a model in sustainability by curtailing greenhouse gas emissions. If we do not meet targets soon, there may well be penalties imposed on us at European level.

This article previously appeared in the Irish Independent on September 20th 1999

ERIC SHEPPARD

An Appreciation

The untimely and tragic passing of Eric has robbed us in the Limerick Greens, and the Party in general, of an inspirational and energetic figure who tirelessly campaigned for all matters of an environmental nature in Limerick and its surrounding areas.

It is difficult to come to terms with the fact that no longer will he be enthusiastically coming in the door at our meetings, and contributing, in a forthright but good-humoured way, on matters in which he believed so strongly.

It is always difficult to take up a cause which is not popular but this is what Eric continually did. Because of his own personal commitment to the people of Limerick, and not for any profit or gain, he founded Limerick Environmental Watch, and then played a leading role in establishing the Greens in Limerick. That we are up and running and going from strength is due almost entirely to Eric's dedicated work.

But it is really as a friend that we will miss Eric. Always there to listen, dependable and loyal, his openness and honesty were a breath of fresh air to all of us, his colleagues.

One of Eric's final achievement's was to be shortlisted for the Ford Conservation Ireland awards for the amount of work he and some of his close friends had done for the preservation of the Corbally Wetlands, the last existing city wetlands in the country. It is with great sadness that we realise that he will not be around to enjoy the fruits of his labours. Eric's legacy, will, however, live on, and indeed, it is our responsibility to ensure that his great work is not forgotten.

To his wife, Doreen and his daughters, Lisa, Natasha and Simone, whom we got to know during various campaigns, canvasses and counts, we extend our deepest sympathy. We know that it is a particularly difficult for them and we hope that, in time, their grief will be somewhat eased by the wonderful memories that they have of a loving husband and father.

Ar dheis De go raibh go raibha anam

LIMERICK GREENS

Captain Mick Baker

We wish to extend our deepest sympathies to Tony and Mary Baker and family of the Wexford Greens who lost their son Captain Mick Baker in a tragic accident during the summer.

Elizabeth Mann

Elizabeth Mann, mother of Nuala Ahern, passed away after a long illness on September 14th. We would like Nuala to know that our thoughts are with her during these difficult times.

GLOWPATH '99

WALK TO SELLAFIELD AND BACK

The shadow of Sellafield continues to loom large in our landscape. Now can be a time to make a strong move to finally bring this to resolution. The Glow Path is an annual walk to bring solutions to the problems of the Sellafield Nuclear Plant. Its purpose is to help to go beyond the risks posed by the nuclear industry. It is non party and open to all. Glow Path doesn't so much oppose the plant or its management and workers but recognises that its problems affect us all. The solutions also lie in all our hands and not only in governments and campaign groups. In fact we are challenged to be supportive of Sellafield management and staff and indeed its owners, the British Government, in solving the Sellafield problem. At the same time it is acknowledged that the activities of Sellafield serve no-one.

The third GLOW PATH will take place in the last week in October leading up to Halloween/Samhain. It will begin on Friday, 22nd of October at Killard, north of Newcastle and near Strangford Lough in County Down. This is in the area on this Island closest to the Sellafield plant and the beautiful district of Cumbria. It will finish just over a week later in Dublin on Sunday 31st of October with a demonstration at the Dail. The first Glow Path walks involving some thirty people were entirely within county Louth and were for a distance of eighty five miles, that is five miles further than the distance from Ballagan Point in County Louth to Sellafield. This was to show how close we are to the plant and to symbolically go beyond that to visualise a time when Sellafield will no longer be a danger. This year the nuclear arms issue which we are faced with in the government decision to join NATO's Partnership for Peace will also be included in the purpose of Glow Path. Therefore GLOW PATH 99 calls for the three 'P's':-

1. Phase out the operations at Sellafield and our government immediately to initiate honest and persistent representations to this effect to the UK Government.
2. People of Ireland to decide by referendum on whether to join PpP as promised by the government.
3. Peaceful and safe environment for us all and our children.

There will be evening workshops during the walk at a number of the overnight stopping places. Participants are very welcome to take part at any stage of the walk and for whatever period they choose. For those taking part for more than one day accommodation can be arranged

Further information is available from:

Neil P. McCann, The Lodge, Miltown Grange, Castlebellingham, County Louth.
phone: 086- 2573482, e-mail tarapath@iol.ie, Glow Path organiser.

GLOW PATH 99 ITINERARY

There may be some adjustment in the daily journeys. Distance is given in miles in brackets. The total distance is 117 miles over 9 days. This is longer than twice the distance from Killard Point to Sellafield. This Glow Path could therefore truly be called 'To Sellafield and Back'.

Fri, 22nd Depart Killard Point 10.00 a.m.
Arrive Clough 5.00 p.m approx (17)
Sat 23rd Clough to Glasdrumman. (13)
Sun 24th Glasdrumman to Greencastle and cross Carlingford Lough by boat to Carlingford. (11)
Mon 25th Carlingford to Dundalk. (14)
Tue 26th Dundalk to Clogherhead (17)
Wed 27th Clogherhead to Drogheda ((11)
Thu 28th Drogheda to Skerries. (15)
Fri 29th Skerries to Whitehall Church Car Park, Dublin outskirts (14)
Sat 30th Depart Whitehall 12.30, Arrive Kildare St. 3.00 p.m. (5)

Green Harvest Fair

Sunday October 17
Kilmacud Community
Hall, Stillorgan, (Beside
Kilmacud Catholic
Church)
2.00p.m. – 6.00p.m.

Autumnal theme, evoking nature with colours and fruits; music; myths; Hallowe'en Celebration; food; wine; crafts; books; children's corner, Variety of stands.

Dublin South Greens
– please help us clear our
local election Debts.

Convention News

The Annual Green Party Convention will be held in the
Central Hotel, Dublin on November 27-28,'99

All members are welcome. For those members who live in areas where there is no active local group please contact the office for an agenda and an outline of the issues to be discussed.

Vote Early Vote Often

The Case For Electoral Reform

by *Cllr. Dan Boyle*

How we vote may not be the burning issue of the day, but there are many within Irish politics who are giving thought to how our current system works, and how it may be made to work better.

Fianna Fáil have already tried twice to change our electoral system. In 1959, they pushed for the British 'first past the post' system, and in 1968 they advocated the Australian system of single seat constituencies with the single transferable vote. On both occasions the Irish people roundly told Fianna Fáil what to do with their suggested 'reforms'.

Ever since then talk of electoral reform emanating from Fianna Fáil has always been considered a euphemism for FF's cherished goal of achieving an overall Dáil majority. But maybe Noel Dempsey should be given a better hearing. He does after all have a good track record of speaking on this issue.

The challenge is to have a system of voting that is user friendly, is equitable, encourages every voter that their vote has a value, is geographically democratic and produces representatives who are local,

PARTY	% VOTES	% SEATS
Fianna Fáil	39.1	46.4
Fine Gael	27.1	32.6
Labour	10.1	10.2
Progressive Democrats	4.5	2.4
Green Party/ Comhaontas Glas	2.8	1.2
Sinn Féin	2.5	0.6
Democratic Left	2.5	2.4
Socialist Party	0.7	0.6
National Party	1.0	0.0
Workers Party	0.4	0.0
Christian Solidarity Party	0.4	0.0
Socialist Workers Party	0.2	0.0
Natural Law Party	0.1	0.0
Others	8.6	3.6

accessible and identifiable. Many would argue that we have most of these elements in our present system. Compared to electoral systems that are found elsewhere, the Irish system does produce largely proportionate results, with the opportunity for smaller political parties to gain representation. As the following table shows, it is not fully proportionate. It gives a bounce to those parties who receive a larger number of votes, while diminishing the value of votes received by

smaller parties. The table to the left is based on the results of the 1997 general election:

For a more proportionate system several alternatives exist. Israel treats its entire country as a constituency, with parties winning seats in exact proportion to their votes. However there is no local identification with candidates, with regional imbalances being common.

The opposite extreme is the Westminster system, where Labour and the Conservatives have won huge majorities despite never winning more than 43% of the popular vote. Those who support this system speak of the need for 'strong government', or single party majority government. To accept this argument is to accept that the purpose of democratic elections is to give to those who secure half of the seats in a national election the right to make all of the decisions. This is patently a distorted perception of democracy, a perception that must be challenged by promoting fair systems of election.



During July Trevor Sargent joined the crew of the MV Greenpeace off the Cumbria coast to keep a watch on the MOX fuel shipment passing through the Irish Sea.

Pictured from left to right:
Nam Hee Kwon (South Korea), John Castle, Captain MV Greenpeace, Trevor, Mike Thornsley, Scottish Greenpeace Campaign Manager and (kneeling) John Bowler.

News Of Overseas Greens

Elections To The European Parliament

A European Triumph For The Greens And A Mediterranean Flop

Recent Elections for the European Parliament spelled the greatest success ever for Green Parties, with a 40% increase in Green MEPs - from 27 to 38 - making them the 4th largest Parliamentary Group. Analysis shows that the Greens in Central and Northern Europe (with the exception of Sweden, Germany and Denmark) are on the upbeat. The German, UK and Irish Greens obtained between 6/7% of the vote; the French, Austrian, Finnish and Luxembourg Greens were around the 10% mark; the Dutch Greens reached 12%, while the Belgian Ecolo and Agalev Green Groups achieved a staggering 22% of the vote.

On the other hand, the Mediterranean Greens are experiencing an all-time low. The only Group who can boast of success are the French Greens who - led by Danny Cohn-Bendit - obtained over 9% of the vote. The Portuguese and Spanish failed to elect a Green MEP; the Italian number dropped to 2 and the Greek Greens did not contest the Election. Green politics in the Mediterranean are thus shown to be in a very serious state — **"Update" (European Federation Of Green Parties), June/July 1999.**

Belgian Greens In Government — Congratulations

The European Federation Of Green Parties send best wishes to the Belgian Green Parties, Ecolo and Agalev, on the successful conclusion of negotiations - with the Liberals, Socialists and Flemish National Party - to form a Coalition Government in Belgium. The Greens now have 4 Ministers - including 1 of the 3 Vice-Prime Ministers - one of whom is *Magda Aelvoet, President of the Green Group in the last European Parliament*, who takes on the Consumer Protection, Health and Environment portfolios.

This triumph of the Belgian Greens brings to 14 the number of Green Ministers in European Governments: - France, Italy, Germany, Finland, Poland, Georgia and Slovakia - and there is a Government Accord in Sweden between the Greens, the Left Party and the governing Social Democratic Party — **Ralph Monö, retiring Secretary-General, European Federation Of Green Parties.**

Green Partnership Across The Atlantic

Last Spring, the European Federation Of Green Parties (EFGP) recognised the Association of State Green Parties (ASGP) - who co-ordinate Green Groups in 25 American States - as their partner, with a view to strengthening Green co-operation between the two Continents — **"Update" (European Federation Of Green Parties), June/July 1999.**

Coillte To Plant Only 5% Broadleaf

In their Strategy Plan, launched in June, the State-owned forest company **Coillte Teo.**, announced that *Conifers* would make up the bulk of their planting programme for the foreseeable future. They stated that all **Coillte** forests would be independently assessed and certified by the end of 1999, to ensure that they are being developed 'in harmony with the natural environment and consistent with the aspirations of the community.'

95% of trees planted by **Coillte** in the future will be *Conifers* so that the new initiative does not go nearly as far as hoped for by environmental organisations and especially by *Crann*, who have

called for a minimum 50% *Broadleaf* planting target in the Republic as a whole. **Coillte** have given an undertaking to maintain natural biodiversity and, towards this end, a significant number of forests will not be developed for timber production. The organisation own a number of semi-natural woodlands — some of them *Special Areas Of Conservation* — which have not been commercially exploited for years and which are more useful to Ireland's native flora and fauna than the *North American Conifer species*, which make up the bulk of their planting programme. Presumably, these are the woodlands which they intend to 'set aside' for scientific and recreational purposes — **"Releafing Ireland" (Crann), Summer 1999.**

No-One Is Above The Law

Amnesty Welcome Milosevic's Indictment For War Crimes

The recent decision by the *International Criminal Tribunal*, that the former Yugoslavia should indict *President Slobodan Milosevic* and other Government officials, is a welcome re-affirmation of the rule of international law that no-one - whether a Head of State or a private soldier - is immune from criminal responsibility for crimes against humanity and war crimes. All States, including Yugoslavia, have a duty, under international law, to arrest the *Yugoslav President* and senior officials, if an international arrest warrant has been issued.

As *Amnesty International* argued in the case of *Augusto Pinochet* before the British House Of Lords, it is a fundamental rule of law that all persons, including current Heads Of State, can be held criminally responsible in national and international courts for crimes under international law - including genocide, other crimes against humanity, war crimes and torture. This rule dates back to the attempt to bring the former German Kaiser to justice after World War One and has been consistently included in international instruments since. It has long been agreed that there is no need to prove that the superior gave direct orders to subordinates to commit the crimes — **"Amnesty-In Ireland" (Amnesty International — Irish Section), June 1999.**

Nuclear War In Kosovo

Depleted Uranium (DU) is one of the largest categories of radioactive waste produced for the nuclear weapons and nuclear reactor industry. It is highly toxic to humans and has recently been substituted for lead in bullets and missiles by the US and UK. It was first used extensively in the Gulf War and is most likely a major contributor to the Gulf War Syndrome, experienced both by veterans and the general public in Iraq.

Used in missiles, *DU* bursts into flames when it hits a target and can pierce tanks and armoured cars, releasing inside them a deadly radioactive aerosol of *Uranium*, which can travel tens of kilometres by air from the point of release or be stirred up in dust and re-suspended with wind or human movement. This radioactive ceramic can stay in the lungs for years, causing emphysema and fibrosis, initiate or promote cancers, do damage to the gastro-intestinal tract and affect the blood. Recent data from Iraq show an increasingly dramatic rise in cancer rates, especially among veterans of the War.

The *UN Human Rights Tribunal* have condemned the use of *DU*, which does not only cause untold suffering to today's victims but can affect the next generation genetically. None of these facts, however, stopped the US and UK from using this

lethal material in Bosnia. And, on March 30, NATO announced that this was also happening in Kosovo — **Institute Of Concern For Public Health, Ontario, Canada.**

Knocking down walls and building hope from the rubble is a wholesome but neglected task in our prosperous world
— **Dick Walsh, Columnist, "Irish Times"**.

GM Technology

As doctors, we are deeply concerned about the rapid and uncontrolled introduction of *Genetically Manipulated foods* into the food-chain, through both animal feeds and human food. While there are growing indications that environmental effects — like horizontal gene-transfer and antibiotic resistance (which were ruled out by Government and industry scientists) — are widespread, no ill-effects on humans have been found to-date. This is not surprising since mixed and unlabelled food make epidemiological assessment extremely difficult, if not impossible.

GM foods are introduced on the strength of assumed equivalence - i.e. a GM tomato with a fish-gene is still called a 'tomato', which is probably true as far as language goes but nonetheless untrue because this 'tomato' contains substances not normally found in tomatoes.

Never in history have free people been fed foods which were entirely untested for safety. This is an illegitimate, mass experiment on people who are not informed, have not given consent. Until stringent experiments to the standard of trials for new drugs have proven the safety of GM foods for humans, it is irresponsible to call them safe and it is certainly not scientific.

Until long-term safety studies have proven the safety of these substances for humans and the environment, we call for:

- A moratorium on GM organisms in farming;
- A ban on GM foods for human and animal consumption;
- An immediate introduction of labelling for all GM products;
- A Government policy that calls for these restrictions internationally.

— **Dr. Elizabeth Cullen, Doctors For The Environment (and a Member of Ireland's Green Party).**

GM Crops Threaten Organic Food

A startling British Report concludes that GM crops will inevitably contaminate organic food, since pollen from such plants can travel long distances on the wind — e.g. with maize, in normal conditions, 180 kms. — and is also carried by insects. 'Neither source of contamination, either pollen or seed, can be entirely eliminated; so acceptable levels have to be decided on' says the Report, by biotechnological and agricultural experts at the John Innes Centre. In Britain, official *Genetically-Engineered crop trials* operate with only a 200 yd. buffer zone but the Soil Association designate a six-mile barrier, as the minimum needed to guarantee non-contamination of organic crops.

In the US, a shipment of organically-grown corn for chips has been contaminated by GE crops; while the National Farmers' Union in Canada are demanding that the Government make agricultural biotechnology companies financially responsible for genetic pollution of organic and traditional crops — **"Organic Matters" (Irish Organic Farmers and Growers' Association), July/August 1999.**

GE Maize Harming Butterflies

Greenpeace - with the help of an entomologist at Exeter University - recently compiled a list of species at risk, after research at America's Cornell University found *Genetically-Engineered Bt-corn* produced a

pollen that could hurt the larvae of the *Monarch Butterfly* - and the *Peacock*, *Swallow Tail*, *Large White* and *Red Admiral Butterflies*. Studies by Cornell and Iowa State Universities show that the effects of pollen from Bt-corn could have an impact on a wider range of lepidoptera, a class of insects that includes *Butterflies* and *Moths*. 'All species, whose caterpillars feed during the pollination time of maize, could be affected by maize pollen, which can be carried on the wind as far as 200 metres from its source,' said Greenpeace. Bt-corn and maize contain a gene as a built-in pesticide against the *European Corn Borer*. An estimated 20,000 hectares of Novartis Bt-maize is being grown in Spain this year, 500 in Germany and approximately 22 Million acres in the US — **"Earthwatch", Midsummer 1999.**

Partnership For Peace

Peace is a Human Right and the abolition of war is a moral and political challenge for just peace in the 21st century. The end of the Cold War provided us with a precious opportunity in this regard. Ireland's joining NATO-led, so-called '*Partnership For Peace*' raises concerns. NATO did not have a blinding experience as St. Paul did on the road to Damascus and thus a change of heart. It has not had a transfiguration as a symbol of world peace. NATO should have demised, with its opposite number of the Soviet military bloc, but instead is carrying out a new role, suiting the interests of its Member-States and without a UN mandate, defying international sensitivities. It prepares for war; it threatens with war; it fights wars and exports war — how can it talk peace! You cannot have peace on your lips and war in your soul! — **AFri and Pax Christi (Irish Section) — "Non-Violent News", Belfast, 8/4/99.**

The Turkish Earthquake, Ireland And The PfP

The lesson from the earthquake in Turkey is that, if the Turkish political élite had spent more money on properly regulated social housing, instead of on the international arms trade, the consequences would not have been so terrible. Yet the Irish political élite are now proposing to spend billions of euros on the international arms trade, in order to join NATO's PfP. The Irish people are being sleep-walked into PfP, which we believe is only another step towards membership of NATO and a federal, nuclear-armed, European superstate — **Roger Cole, Chairperson, Peace And Neutrality Alliance, 1/9/99.**

Massive Windfarm Planned Off Dublin Bay

A foreshore licence is being sought for 100 Wind Turbines rooted on the Kish Bank in Dublin Bay, by a consortium consisting of the ESB, Saorgas Energy, Co. Kerry and Powergen (UK). This project would be the largest of its kind in the world.

'Green' energy must be sustainable, with all environmental issues taken into account. A large body of evidence suggests that the Kish Bank is heavily utilised by foraging seabirds — especially from May to September. Submarine banks are important to surface or shallow-diving species — e.g. Terns, Gulls and Shearwaters — since they force fish shoals close to the surface, where they are accessible. The Greater Dublin area supports two internationally-important seabird colonies: Rockabill Island, with 600 pairs of Roseate Terns — the largest colony in NW Europe — and Lambay Island, with 50,000+ Guillemots, both Areas Of Special Protection. The impact of offshore Windfarms is not known but there are likely to be two effects on birds: direct mortality, due to collision with blades and loss of feeding habitat because of the displacement of birds from the Windfarm area.

Birdwatch Ireland have made representations to the Departments

NEWS from Sheila M. Hussey

of the Marine and Enterprise and Employment for a formal *Environmental Impact Assessment* to be carried out, before a decision is made on the suggested development.. — **"Wings" (BirdWatch Ireland), Summer 1999.**

BirdWatch Ireland have now been assured by *ESB International* that this proposed development is still at the feasibility stage, and that a full *Environmental Impact Statement*, with evaluation of the area's bird interests, will be included in the submission of a foreshore licence application — **"Wings" (BirdWatch Ireland), Autumn 1999.**

Lethal Cargoes Crossing the Irish Sea

For some time, *Greenpeace International* and *Ireland's Green Party* have been highlighting the enormous global risk posed by the transportation from *Sellafield* of lethal cargoes of reprocessed nuclear fuel to Japan, via the Irish Sea — crossing within 16 miles of *Tuskar Rock* — round the Cape Of Good Hope, between Australia and New Zealand, arriving finally at nuclear plants at *Takahama* and *Fukushima*. (This — the longest route to Japan — is taken to avoid the nuclear trouble-spots of China, North Korea and Iraq). These ships also carry ammunition, small arms and their own fuel, thus further adding to the tremendous security risk of these operations. The reprocessed nuclear fuel — itemised as 'Category 1, Weapons Grade Plutonium' by the *International Atomic Energy Agency* — could be converted into nuclear bombs within a few weeks and the value of this dangerous cargo has been conservatively estimated at tens of millions of pounds.

A huge, new, commercial, nuclear reprocessing plant has been built at *Sellafield* and awaits British Government approval before starting production. This could be the world's second largest plutonium reprocessing plant and its opening would be a major blow to hopes of reducing nuclear proliferation. *Irish Green Party MEP, Nuala Ahern* and *TD Trevor Sargent* have called on the Government to protest at the passage of these hazardous shipments through the Irish Sea. *John Bowler*, from Dublin, fulltime activist with *Greenpeace International*, comments: 'Ireland has an exclusive 200-mile economic zone, the waters within which are a *Whale and Dolphin Sanctuary*. If we can do that, surely we could declare that same area a nuclear-free zone'

— Written from a "Sunday Tribune" interview with *John Bowler*, 29/8/99.

The Bicycle

Bicycles cause no pollution. They are silent, economical, discreet, accessible to all members of the family and, above all, faster than a car over short, urban distances. As a result, *Bicycles* represent a solution that fits perfectly into any general policy which seeks to enhance the urban environment. We now believe that the promotion of cycling is one of the key features of sustainable transport systems in urban areas — **European Commission, June 1999.**

Deadly Landmines

All *NATO States* — except the *US* and *Turkey* — have signed the *Mine Ban Treaty*, which entered into force last March. The *US* reserved the right to use deadly, anti-personnel Landmines, during the *Kosovo* conflict, causing great concern to the *Nobel Peace Prize-winning International Campaign To Ban Landmines* — *Trócaire (Catholic Agency For World Development)*.

Hurricane Mitch: Organic Plantations Survived!

Last year, *Hurricane Mitch* devastated *Nicaragua*. Decades of land abuse and environmental degradation magnified the toll of death and damage. Deforestation played a major role. Expansion of export crops — such as coffee, sugar, cotton, tobacco — and cattle pushed the agricultural frontier further towards the Rainforests and small farmers were forced on to marginal land on mountain slopes.

When *Mitch* struck, flooding and mudslides occurred in unprecedented proportions where the land had been cleared of trees and other natural vegetation. However, sustainable agriculture methods seem to have protected some crops from being totally destroyed; organic coffee farmers — who grow their coffee in the shade of a variety of trees, alongside beans and bananas and use a system of terraces to conserve soil and a network of trenches to catch rain water and debris — were not severely impacted by the hurricane — **"Earthwatch", Midsummer, 1999.**

Our Immigrants

It is not possible for this small island to put up walls against the rest of the world, stopping people at our frontiers. We should not just accept immigrants because we are wealthy and owe a duty of care to those less well-off, although we do. We should accept them because we need them and because a multicultural Ireland will be a more vibrant and interesting place in which we have far more to gain than lose. There is no reason, however, why it should be a chaotic process in which a policy vacuum simply pits the disadvantaged outsider against the disadvantaged insider. There is much to learn from other countries and a failure of imagination and politics on this scale would be inexcusable — **Piarsa MacEinri, Director, Irish Centre for Immigration Studies, UCC, Cork.**

The one thing I would like people in Ireland to realise is how the world is extremely interconnected, Globalisation isn't just about economics. Decisions made in developed countries affect those living in developing countries. The role of every citizen in Ireland does matter. Debt cancellation must be on the terms of the communities affected — the ultimate aim of the *Jubilee 2000 Campaign* — **Jagjit Plahe, "Eco News", Africa (Partner of Trócaire)**

A Further Threat To The Corncrake

An application to build 54 houses at *Big Meadow, Athlone*, where the *Corncrake* still breeds, has been lodged with *Athlone Urban District Council* — and is opposed by *BirdWatch Ireland*, the *Irish Wildlife Trust* and *An Taisce*.

The *Corncrake* — Ireland's only globally-threatened species — now exists in only 3 core areas, including the *Shannon Callows*, a *Special Protection Area*, within which most of the proposed houses would be. The flooding of the *Callows* each winter would necessitate reclamation of the hay meadow for the proposed building, some of which has already taken place without planning permission. The impact of this development on the *Corncrake* would be severe, particularly in one of the fields concerned, home to 6 *Singing Corncrakes* — constituting one of the highest densities of the bird in that region — **"Wings" (BirdWatch Ireland), Autumn 1999.**

US Dominance Of Global Arms Trade

Urgent Necessity To Monitor Use In Human Rights Abuses

The US dominate the post-Cold War global market for arms and security equipment - total sales for the 1989/96 period being estimated at more than \$117 billion, approximately 45% of the world total. Successive American Governments have authorised exports of arms and equipment to countries with a record of Human Rights abuses — such as *Indonesia, Turkey and Colombia* — including the sale of thousands of stun guns to *Indonesia* in 1993, in the face of persistent reports of electro-shock torture by *Indonesian Government agents*, thus completely demolishing the US Government's claim to promote Human Rights and freedom around the world.

A current *Amnesty International* campaign aims at encouraging international pressure for a tough and effective **US Code Of Conduct** — to regulate trading of arms, military equipment and services — based on international humanitarian law and international Human Rights standards and covering all American transfers of military, security and police equipment, services and expertise. It is also vital that the US Government ban outright the export of equipment used solely for executions or torture, including remote-control electro-shock stun belts. These measures would do much to strengthen the protection of Human Rights throughout the globe — **"Amnesty-In Ireland"** (*Amnesty International - Irish Section*), June 1999.

Without memory, there is no healing. Without forgiveness, there is no future. Forgiveness is not nebulous, impractical and idealistic. It is thoroughly realistic

— **Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Laureate.**

Coral Bones

70/90% of the *Corals* in the Indian Ocean had died by the end of last year and a significant proportion of *Corals* elsewhere in the world are dead or bleached, their symbiotic algae killed. Their wasting is blamed on ocean temperatures that, in 1998, were the highest on record — **"Earthwatch", Midsummer 1999.**

Forthcoming Events:

October 23/24 Bird Bonanza - Weekend in Dingle, Co.Kerry - *BirdWatch Ireland* - Details: 01 280 4322.

October 30 Places That Touch The Sky — Archaeology Of Uplands And Mountains - One-day Seminar - Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, Dublin 8-8.30a.m./5.30p.m. - *Archaeology Ireland and Dúchas* - Details: 01 286 2649

November 7 Coach Outing to Wexford Wildfowl Reserve - *BirdWatch Ireland* - Details: 01 260 1568

November 13 Sale of Work - Save the Bogs - Christchurch, Rathgar, Dublin 6 10.00a.m. - 3.00p.m. - *Irish Peatland Conservation Council*

November 14 Bull Island Open Day, Dublin 3 - *BirdWatch Ireland* - Details: 01 849 07 87

November 16 Irish Seal Sanctuary - Illustrated Talk - Moyle Park College, Clondalkin, Dublin 22 8.30p.m. - *BirdWatch Ireland*

2000 February

19/26 Sahara Desert Hike — For Dublin Simon Community £150 To Register — Flights, Food, Accommodation, Guides and Training Schedule All Provided — Minimum Sponsorship Required - Details: 01 872 0188

Threat By Kerry Windfarm to Nesting Hen Harriers

Planning permission has been granted for the construction of a 23-turbine *Windfarm* at an upland site close to *Eagle Mountain, Co. Kerry*, which will be located next to the nesting-sites of 4 pairs of *Hen Harriers*, a threatened species in this country. A condition of

the planning permission is that environmental monitoring be completed at the site. It is essential that the project's impact on the birds is carefully checked before other *Windfarms* are allowed on sites as sensitive as this — **"Wings"** (*BirdWatch Ireland*), Spring 1999.

Our Friends the Animals

The Red Fox - A Millennium Success Story

Despite the worldwide destruction of Wildlife habitats and the extinction of thousands of species, the *Red Fox* is thriving and occupies habitats right across the Northern Hemisphere and Australia, although heavily persecuted — hunted for its fur, chased shot, poisoned, snared and trapped by the thousand, as an agricultural pest — and hunted for sport. Dublin City and suburbs have a healthy population of urban *Foxes*, in densities comparable to those of many British cities.

The *Red Fox* is an opportunistic omnivore and utilises whatever food sources are available. Dublin *Foxes* live on invertebrates from lawns and flower-beds, small mammals and birds, berries and other fruits. Urban *Foxes* suffer a very high mortality rate but their reproduction success outstrips their death-rate — thus making them one of the 20th century's mammal achievement stories. This species should thrive far into the next Millennium

— **"The Badger"** (*Irish Wildlife Trust*), Spring 1999.

The Butterfly Family

These are the months for *Butterflies*, which were still caterpillars in midsummer, feeding on nettles and grasses and are now adult, drinking the nectar of garden flowers. *Red Admirals* reach Ireland only as summer visitors, flying the incredible distance from the Mediterranean to lay their eggs here. Their progeny cannot survive our winters and migrate south with the *Swallows*. *Peacocks* (with dramatic eyespots) and *Small Tortoiseshells* (with orange, white and brown-patterned wings) hibernate throughout our winter and often fly into houses seeking a sheltered crevice in which to settle — while the dark brown *Ringlets* prefer damp, grassy meadows, fly even on drizzly days and take their name from creamy circles on their underwings.

Meadow Browns — brown, with an orange patch on the forewing — are common in meadows. *Wall Browns* sport broken patterns on their wings and are so named because of their habit of basking on walls, while *Gatekeepers* occur only along our south coast and *Speckled Woods* — dappled with white spots — are mostly found in woodlands. *Peacocks*, *Red Admirals* and *Small Tortoiseshells* feed exclusively on nettles. Ireland's most common *Butterfly* is the *Green-Veined White*.

Butterflies are ephemeral creatures, built to last only the few, short weeks it takes to feed, mate and lay eggs. And, like so many other animals and plants, they are vulnerable to human activities — **"Organic Matters"** (*Irish Organic Farmers' & Growers' Association*), July/August, 1999.

When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a Communist — **Dom Helder Camara, former Catholic Archbishop of Recife, Brazil, who died on 27/8/99, aged 90. This four-times Candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize and twice an assassination target was an internationally revered and respected crusader for social justice globally and much-loved champion of the Brazilian poor, the landless and oppressed.**

END

The European experience of elections is mixed. Most countries use a list system to equalise the number of seats won. Nearly all of these systems use a threshold to limit the number of parties between whom seats are shared. The thresholds vary between 1% and 5% of the contested vote. The higher the threshold the less representative the distribution of seats will be. Other variations would be differences on whether lists are compiled on a regional or national basis. Again, the wider the geographical base the fairer the seat distribution. The third factor in achieving equity is the number of seats available for distribution through lists, the more that are available the equitable it will be.

Arguments about list systems centre around how lists are compiled. A number of options are available. An unsatisfactory method is the 'smoke filled room' method where party functionaries get appointed according to how well they work the dynamics of internal party politics, but such skills do not require engaging with the general voting public. A more active system would be to organise national primary elections for each political party. My preferred system would be to allocate seats to the best performing candidates of each qualifying party in a general election.

A new Irish election model could look something like this -

A Dáil of 110 members (which would not

require constitutional amendment)

55 seats elected in single seat constituencies with single transferable vote proportional representation.

55 seats distributed to best performing candidates of parties who receive more than 2% of the national vote (this would require constitutional change)

Using the 1997 general election results such a system would produce the following seat allocations:

TABLE 2 (below)

The 2.8% of the vote the Green Party received in 1997 would probably increase under this system, as every vote in the country would be contested

PARTY	% VOTES	CONSTITUENCIES	LIST	TOTAL
Fianna Fáil	39.1	29	19	48
Fine Gael	27.1	21	12	33
Labour	10.1	2	10	12
Progressive Democrats	4.5	0	6	6
Green Party/Comhaontas Glas	2.8	0	3	3
Sinn Féin	2.5	1	2	3
Democratic Left	2.5	0	3	3
Socialist Party	0.7	1	0	1
National Party	1.0	0	0	0
Workers Party	0.4	0	0	0
Christian Solidarity Party	0.4	0	0	0
Socialist Workers Party	0.2	0	0	0
Natural Law Party	0.1	0	0	0
Others	8.6	1	0	1

Report from the National Co-Ordinator

The CC continues to meet on a monthly basis. There are regular reports presented to Council which detail its activities. These are available from the Fownes St office if any member would like to see them. Attendance records vary considerably from almost always, to many who drop in occasionally to one member who has never attended. Frequently members do not attend and provide no explanation for their absence. It is often the case that a member will then reappear after an absence of one or more meetings and query or challenge previous decisions.

Speaking personally as co-ordinator, my experience has been that it is almost impossible for the CC to arrive at effective decisions which are capable of implementation. The CC defers decisions or

sets up another sub-committee or avoids grasping the nettle in a variety of ways. The necessary decisions to run the Party are increasingly being taken elsewhere at sub-committee meetings, at the staff co-ordination meetings or by the Leadership Group although these groupings do not have the constitutional authority to act in this way. In my opinion there are various possible ways to remedy this:

1. A refocusing of the CC towards becoming a management or executive committee with increased powers. Such a committee would need to be smaller, meet more regularly with consistent attendance. Its membership should be composed largely of those who have the time to give to address ongoing Party

business. It does not work when composed largely of volunteers with many other commitments.

2. Alternatively, a party management structure could be put in place by appointing a general secretary (GS) and a leadership who would carry out the functions of running the party. In this scenario the present CC could continue but its powers would be devolved to the leadership group which could contain the GS.
3. Some combination of the above would be possible

It is hoped that proposals on these matters will be brought to the Annual Convention for debate at the end of November.

By Phil Kearney

REFERENDUMS, 'NEVER-END-UMS' AND THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION

By Peter Emerson

AS we now know, the joy which comes from the referendum results in East Timor has to be tempered by the violence which has taken place, not only in that troubled land, but elsewhere in Indonesia. The people of Aceh in Sumatra have now called for a referendum on independence. So too have others in Ambon. Irian Jaya may well be next. And violence is spreading.

In a country of 7,000 inhabited islands, does every 'people' have the right to self-determination? Can any group concoct a border, on land or at sea, such that it will be in a majority, and then call for a vote? Is it any wonder some are already calling Indonesia "Asia's Yugoslavia"?

Lessons are there to be learnt. Let us first, therefore, recall just one aspect of the Balkan tragedy, the history of the simple, two-option referendum, before next discussing other examples, and then suggesting a better way of effecting constitutional change.

Since 1975 and the Helsinki Final Act, the European Union has recognised the inviolability of all international borders, including therefore, those of Yugoslavia. At the same time, we recognised the opposite, namely, the right of peoples to self-determination. But this we did, without defining what constitutes 'a people', and without questioning the methodology to be used, the simple two-option vote.

Initially, then, we supported *Milosevic*, but in 1991/2, in the wake of the Croatian war, we asked the Badinter Commission to rule on whether parts of Yugoslavia had the

right to self-determination and, if so, which parts. The result, we recall, was a hotchpotch. Slovenia, which had already held a referendum, was recognised as independent. It caused a war, but thankfully only a small one. Croatia had held two referendums, one by the Croats in a bid to secede from, and one by the Serbs in the '*krajina*' to try to remain in, Yugoslavia; the two polls, therefore, both democratic, were mutually exclusive; both involved high turnouts and 90% + majorities, but the first one we recognised, the second we did not. The conflict started a much more serious war.

Bosnia had not held a referendum at that stage and was instructed to do so, with the proviso that no outcome should be recognised if there was not a measure of support from each of the three main communities. Along with some smaller groups of Vlachs and Roma, etc., the 1990 elections had shown Bosnia to be, nominally, 40% Moslem, 30% Orthodox (Serb) and 20% Catholic (Croat). So no one grouping had a majority, but any combination of two could attain the necessary 50%. Accordingly, the Catholics ganged up with the Moslems, and the Bosnian Serbs organised a boycott. The outcome of 99% in favour therefore failed to comply with Badinter's proviso - the turnout was only (sic) 66% - but we nevertheless chose to recognise Bosnia's independence. That vote also started a bloody war: initially the Moslems and Croats fought the Serbs, then the Croats fought the Moslems and sometimes helped the Serbs. In summary, to quote Sarajevo's now legendary newspaper, '*Oslobodjenje*', "*all the wars in the former Yugoslavia started with a referendum*", (7.2.99).

One could also say it was a cause of war in Kosova. By Badinter's ruling, Kosovo had held a referendum in 1991, but that poll was ignored. At Rambouillet, however, we changed our minds and suggested there could be such a ballot in three years' time. Knowing they had won the previous vote by a margin of 99% on an 87% turnout, the KLA readily agreed. They were bound to win! *Milosevic* of course did not agree; he was equally inevitably bound to lose. Hence the war. It stopped when we changed our minds again, and the referendum in Kosova is now no longer a fixed definite; instead, it is to "*be considered*".

In all four of the above referenda, anyone who might otherwise have wanted to vote for compromise was, in effect, disenfranchised. They include those who are in mixed marriages, those who are "*ethnically unclean*", those who have grown tired of any adversarial nationalism, and those who are the more peaceful. Is it wise, therefore, that the world should continue to believe in this most primitive voting procedure which is so similar to the other two-option decision-making process it sometimes provokes: war? Let's have a look.

There have been calls for a referendum in Kashmir, yet how on earth could such a divisive vote bring about a *rapprochement* between those two opposing religious factions? There have been similar calls in the Sudan, yet given the tribal and religious differences, a two-option poll will again fail to heal the rift between north and south. There have already been two referendums in Quebec, where some French-speaking Quebecois argue with some English-speaking folk, while the "*ethnically unclean*", the Cree Indians, are ignored! (No wonder they too held their own referendum, just like the

krajina Serbs in Croatia.)

Finally, there have also been calls for a series of referendums in Northern Ireland - which means, as in Quebec, our process of constitutional change may also turn into a 'never-end-um'. Furthermore, such a referendum is enshrined into the Belfast Agreement and may take place, every seven years or so. In our first referendum, the border poll in 1973, the SDLP abstained - (just like the Bosnian Serbs in 1992) - for it was a British-versus-Irish contest, a battle which one side was bound to win, the other to lose. It would not, and could not, bring peace. Any future vote as per the Agreement will also be a British-versus-Irish question, with no offer of compromise. To hold such a poll would be at least unwise.

The only sort of two-option vote which *might* be able to facilitate a reconciliation would be something similar to last year's Northern Ireland poll, for it was a 'compromise: yes-or-no' question, set by all the (pro-agreement) parties. In most situations, however, a constitutional referendum is a contest where the question is posed in a most uncompromising form, by one of the antagonists! No wonder they start wars!

A better approach would suggest international law should stipulate that any group wishing to secede should seek both a broad consensus within its new borders, and the agreement of their neighbours to be in the old borders. As far as the former is concerned, a sufficiently broad consensus would best be achieved by a multi-option process in which compromise options were also allowed to appear on the ballot paper. First, then, hold a commission or some such, to establish just what options do exist; then hold a vote on a representative number of options, (as happened in Newfoundland in 1948 where they had three options, as too in Singapore in 1962 and Puerto Rico in 1967; meanwhile, in Guam in 1982, they had seven options!). All those votes were majoritarian, however, so if any one option did not attain an absolute majority, they held a second vote between the two first round favourites.

Majoritarian voting, of course, is still adversarial. For a real consensus to emerge, the wiser approach is to allow each voter to award points to his/her various preferences, and to then add the points cast for each option, to see which option has the most. This is the only voting procedure so far devised which a majority cannot manipulate. It was first proposed in 1435 by Nicholas of Cusa who was perturbed by the white smoke and other aspects of the decision-making processes employed by his fellow cardinals. His proposals for a more consensual approach, however, were not accepted.

Despite the existence of this points system, better known in its more developed form as a 'Borda preferendum', most politicians and umpteen political scientists still believe in the majority vote. (See, for example, p 398 of the 1996 Report of the Constitutional Review Group, where they state unequivocally: "Democracy works on the basis of a decision by a majority.") When and by whom the latter was invented, I don't know; in a recent seminar in Belfast, one academic suggested it might have been the cavemen. How strange, then, that people should still suggest disputes should continue to be resolved by this most primitive methodology even when, as often as not, it only works to exacerbate them. It is, indeed, a cause of war!

In the case of East Timor, it is even more extraordinary, for the 1975 invasion was an illegal act. Are we trying to say that a majority vote can legitimise a crime? Is there to be any hope for Tibet, which has suffered not only an invasion but also massive settlements by peoples of the invading power? Will the international community never question the simple majority vote? Even on domestic issues such as abortion, where there are obviously more than two options, will the government try and pretend there can be only one? Is democracy to be "a fix"?

Peter Emerson runs the deBorda Institute

Investors Wanted to Create an Eco-village

On Saturday 18th September in the Central Hotel, Dublin, the seven directors of the Charitable Company Sustainable Projects Ireland Ltd presented the companies prospectus. The Company is seeking a community of investors who are interested in the creation of an ecological village within a one- hour travel radius of Dublin.

John Gormley Green Party TD for Dublin South East - one of the companies directors - addressed a group of about 80 people stating that there was an urgent need to establish working models that can give Irish people an ecological choice when it comes to buying a home.

The company wants to set up a community of about 45 houses, a community centre, and an enterprise centre all on a 100-acre rural site. The "village" aims to be a model of sustainable development for the next millennium, leading the way in areas such as ecological building, local enterprise development, renewable energy systems, rural regeneration, local job creation, ecological waste management, and social/ environmental education.

When complete the village will house up to 40 families in attractive, affordable houses, designed to be ecologically and economically efficient.

Sustainable Projects Ireland Ltd. specialises in sustainable development, which is a rapidly growing sector covering a wide range of business opportunities, renewable energy, organic farming, recycling and environmental house design. The Village will lead the way in this exciting new sector. The company will offer businesses and Local Authorities a chance to support ecological initiatives, and help define sustainable development, as it is outlined in the U.N charter, Local Agenda 21

Before the company can buy a site an initial capital fund of £600,000 must be raised. To this end the community of investors is being set in place. This fund will be held in account until the investors in the company agree which site they wish to buy. In total the company requires a capital investment fund of about £1.2 million, requiring 40 investors at approximately £30,000 each.

A full financial investment package and prospectus is available. Send an A4 SAE and 40 pence postage to "The Village" 19 Grantham St. Dublin 8 or check our web site at www.sustainable.buz.org. Email is thevillage@tinnet.ie

Around the Country

Young Green Network

It is a cliché of the Greens that we do not inherit the world from our parents, we only borrow it from our children. Unfortunately it would appear that having borrowed it we are in no hurry to return it.

One of the most striking features of a party that professes to look to the future is the rather high age-profile of its members. In an attempt to increase the appeal of the Greens to young people a group of us have undertaken to organise a Young Greens Network.

The basic idea is to set up a network of young people interested in environmental issues. The network will facilitate young people to become directly involved in the environment. By raising awareness and encouraging involvement we will cultivate new generations of green activists.

The network will not be a part of the Green Party as such but initially we hope to see the group sponsored and supported by the Greens. If the network operates successfully a proportion of participants may be recruited into more direct parliamentary activity. We hope that a functioning youth wing of the party will be up and running in the near future and that there will be a natural progression from the Green Network to the Youth Wing and through to the party proper.

The network will provide an information/communication resource for young people spread over a large area, initially greater Dublin but eventually over the entire country.

Boredom is one of the main factors that turns

young people off party politics. Young people want action, glamour, a sense of achievement. The network will encourage young people to get directly involved in environmental activities by organising a variety of campaigns including (non-violent) direct actions.

Unsurprisingly there will be a slow grind in setting up this proposed network. We are looking at a launch date in September 2000 (start of the next academic year). The groundwork; the proposals, structures, co-ordinators etc., will need to be in place before that (June '00)

A steering group has been set up to oversee the initial organisation. Right now we welcome anyone who has the time and enthusiasm to contribute to the organisation of the proposed Network. We are particularly interested in hearing from young, say under 25(ish), members of the party.

If you want to get involved please contact: Dominic Leonard – dominicleonard@hotmail.com or Martin Shiels at felixb@ocean.ie or Kalimna, Coyne's Cross, Ashford, Co. Wicklow.

Sonairte Course Reed Bed for Agricultural Waste November 6, 1999

This course looks into all aspects of reed beds and sewage treatment. The lecturer is Mr. Ollan Herr and the cost for this day is £45. Please book early to avoid disappointment. For enquiries please phone: 041-9827572 or 041-9827854

other environmentalists and a very diligent Waterford/Kilkenny study group have been successful to the extent that there is now a wider appreciation of the alternative solutions. It seems we have also convinced Waterford Corporation of the merits of home composting since they are now providing composting bins upon request.

Louth Greens

The County Louth Greens ran a good campaign and had a fair result in the local elections. All five, first-time candidates polled greater than 4.6% and the highest came in at 5.4%. With Nuala Ahern gaining a 20% vote in Co Louth, the prospects of increasing the Co Louth percentage in the next General Election looks good.

While there was no real success in gaining a seat at local authority level, there is an obvious feeling from both the public and even some media people that "the Greens do a good job in Co Louth". The group is now focusing on the work necessary to run a good campaign for the next general election.

Funding, media profile, tally interpretation, candidate proposal and selection, flyers and posters are all on the table for discussion. We believe that with the small amount of resources and limited energies it is prudent to plan well in advance for the next general election.

The big issues in the Louth area are waste management and traffic. With a waste management plan spread like slurry between Cavan, Monaghan, Meath and Louth there is an initiative to develop a focused group between these areas in order to deal with different issues that cross over county lines, saving energy and resources.

Within the next three years Co Louth will have a motorway and a main rail line running the length of the smallest county in Ireland. These initiatives will not solve the traffic problems. A major awareness campaign is being sustained by the Louth Green group to offer alternative solutions not always obvious to our local authorities.

The Co Louth Greens can be contacted through: Michael McKeon 94 Rosevale Drogheda Co Louth e-mail msmckeon@tinnet.ie Home 041-9833709

Waterford Greens

Following the elections earlier this year, much of the activity of the Waterford Group has centred upon solving the area's continuing and worsening waste crisis and creating awareness of the shortcomings of the South East Regional Authority's proposals seek to introduce incineration as the primary means of waste disposal. Members of the group have liaised with