

PROTESTS AGAINST

FRACKING



CHARITY VOW: Uri Geller

Uri: Isle have my very own little country

URI Geller has created his own country – off the coast of Scotland.

The legendary spoon-bender has declared the tiny island of Lamb – which he bought in 2009 – a micronation which will have its own flag, constitution and national anthem.

He is offering citizenship to his fans for as little as \$1 (€0.98) with all cash going to a charity for children with heart conditions.

Create

No-one can live there as human settlement on the 330ft by 160ft island is not allowed.

But Uri (75) who lives in Israel, said: “Lamb is a place like no other and it deserves its own identity. “I decided to go one better and create my own little country.”



RAPPER: Tupac Shakur

Police step up probe into Tupac killing

COPS have secretly stepped up their probe into rapper Tupac Shakur's drive-by murder nearly 26 years ago.

Sources say that Las Vegas Metro detectives have contacted Keefe D – the last man alive from the vehicle where the fatal bullets were fired at the 25-year-old.

Book

It comes after Keefe wrote a book and gave interviews telling how he saw his nephew Orlando Anderson fire at Tupac in September 1996.

Anderson died in a drugs shootout in 1998.

A source said: “There is certainly talk within the Metro homicide teams that after so long gathering dust, the files are out, being assessed and could finally see the case closed.”



FURORE: Signs at Kerry Climate Camp (also inset) against proposed Shannon LNG import facility

US veteran's plea to block imports from fields that have 'poisoned' community's water supplies

RAYMOND Kemble is a proud military veteran. But nothing prepared him for the silent enemy which has forced him to undergo seven cancer surgeries and left his community facing a battle for survival.

Raymond has lost a brother, friends and neighbours to the poison he says stalks their community.

It's what brought him from the gas fracking fields around his home in Pennsylvania to Ireland's west coast.

A former gas worker turned anti-fracking campaigner, Raymond came with a plea to the Irish Government to block a major gas importing facility at Shannon which would come complete with a deepwater jetty, storage tanks and gas-fired power station at Ballylongford, Co Kerry.

If built, it could handle fracked gas from communities like his which have been ravaged by its effects.

He told his story as he stood with protestors at a Climate Camp on the banks of the Shannon last week.

And if Ireland accepts the LNG terminal, Raymond, who has Cork ancestry,

■ Shauna CORR
Environment Correspondent

says it will heap even more misery on those living in fracking areas.

“We never had cancer or anything like that before and in one year we had over 13 people diagnosed with cancer... all within a mile of my house,” he said.

“I have gone through seven cancer surgeries in a year-and-a-half. They took a tumour out of my brain.. my arm, the top of my heart and the rest was bladder and prostate cancer.

Hard

“I found my brother passed away. That was hard and that's not counting the other people we just buried.

“A good friend of mine who worked on the same gas pads I worked on, died. He was diagnosed with barium and radiation poisoning.”

Despite repeated calls from families impacted by cancer near fracking wells, the US Department of Health has so far resisted calls for an in-depth probe into potential links.

On top of Ray's health concerns, he says the water supply to his house is

also unsafe with official tests in 2010 finding uranium, thorium, barium, lithium, large amounts of methane and a range of other contaminants.

“I am here talking about health and human rights [and what's] being inflicted upon us in Pennsylvania to bring this gas here,” he added.

“I want to stop this. It's the worst thing in the world you could think of.”

Hydraulic Fracturing, or fracking, is banned in Ireland.

But over 1.7 million fracking wells have been drilled in the US to extract natural gas by creating underground cracks with pressure and chemicals.

The process has been associated with a number of health risks including breathing problems, cardiac and neurological issues, premature birth and carcinogenic chemicals. New Fortress said in their 2018 registration statement to the United States Securi-



FEARS: (from top) Walsh, Kehoe and Bogue

ties and Exchange Commission “certain of our suppliers employ hydraulic fracturing techniques”.

Frack Action director Julia Walsh, who helped secure a fracking ban in New York state in 2014, says: “The United States is overwhelmingly using fracked gas to export.

“It's become a leading world supplier of LNG and the harm it has created, the havoc, the public health nightmare that Ireland and your government rightly banned... are the reasons why that harm should not be inflicted on those of us in the United States.

“We heard about Shannon LNG and the export terminal is proposed near where I live in the Delaware River. We've come to work together to stop this.

“The Irish Government banned fracking and this is the natural progression of that ban because the gas that will come to Ireland through liquefied

GAS TERMINAL

HELL

FREE FOR ALL: Fracking in the US where more than 1.7m wells have been drilled to extract gas using method which has been banned in Ireland

'It's the worst thing in the world you could think of'



APPEAL: Ray Kemble from Pennsylvania, whose well water has been 'poisoned'



Planned Shannon facility could ship in fuel drilled using practice banned here

natural gas would be from fracking."

Over 150 people took part in the two-hour occupation on the site of the proposed Shannon LNG gas import terminal on the Shannon Estuary in north Kerry on Sunday.

Organisers described it as a "show of strength and a warning" to project developer US corporation New Fortress Energy and the Irish Government.

Environmental scientist at the Nature Conservancy, Dr Laura Kehoe, says politicians are not listening to scientists.

"I've spent so many years writing reports, publishing papers and policy makers aren't listening," she insisted.

Consensus

"My view of the project [Shannon LNG] is that it goes completely against the scientific consensus that we cannot afford any new fossil fuel projects if we have a chance of staying within 1.5C of global warming.

"The IPCC made that very clear – no new fossil fuel infrastructure and LNG is a fossil fuel gas – it's methane essentially.

"It won't help with the energy crisis – it will take five years for this to be built. What we need to do is invest in renewables and sustainable jobs here.

"The Government has banned fracking in Ireland so why would we import it from somewhere else if we understand how dangerous it is to local communities? Our leaders aren't leading, so we must."

Cork City councillor Lorna Bogue said: "We had an issue in Cork that is quite similar [in] that a company tried to bring fracked gas through the port. A lot of my constituents stood very strongly against that and I think the two struggles are linked."

Green Party MEP Grace O'Sullivan says she has "seen Fianna Fail and Fine Gael speaking openly in favour of the Shannon LNG project" in the European Parliament "despite it being a key demand in the Programme for Government that this would not be supported with public funds".

"Not only will it take years to construct, this will lock us into fossil fuel contracts for years to come," she added.

"Some have used the war in Ukraine to justify it, yet one of the largest exporters of LNG to Europe is still Russia, while US gas comes from fracked sources that have

caused massive damage, especially to indigenous communities."

Ireland's Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications says "it would not be appropriate for the development of any LNG terminals to be permitted" before the outcome of a review on the security of Ireland's electricity and natural gas systems later this year.

We asked Taoiseach Micheal Martin if he could be sure all the gas New Fortress Energy hopes to bring to Ireland is not fracked.

Supplies

He said in a statement he would "not comment on any specific project other than to say that LNG that uses fuel that's not direct from fracking... is consistent with the Programme for Government".

"The Programme for Government is clear they don't want LNG supplies from fracking," he added. "Personally in that context (that it can be done without fracking) then I think we'd have to give consideration to LNG, given the energy security issue that has arisen from the war."



COMMENT: Martin

CHRISTOPHER BUKTIN
Our man in America

Hell and back for tax breaks

WE ALL know there are no depths Trump will not stoop to for personal gain — including six feet under.

The former President recently had his ex-wife Ivana (inset) buried at his golf club in New Jersey.

But following the unearthing of an article several years ago, it seems there may be a reason as to why.

Back in the day, Trump floated the idea of having a cemetery on the land — giving himself a hugely beneficial tax

break. Under New Jersey's law, it would exempt the site from taxes, rates, and assessments. And you thought he was all heart.

★★★★★
ELIZABETH Johnson, Jr., the last known Massachusetts resident legally classified as a witch, has finally been exonerated. Although condemned to death in 1693 — at the height of the Salem Witch Trials — she was never executed.

★★★★★
UTAH'S Cory Martin has an itchy-bitsy problem after being arrested accused of starting a wildfire while trying to burn a spider.

The 26-year-old told cops he spotted the insect (right) last week while he was in a hiking area in the foothills south of Salt Lake City.

Deputies found a jar of marijuana in his belongings. Still, according to Sheriff's Sergeant Spencer Cannon, he didn't appear to be high.

"What led him to stop and notice a spider and decide to try to burn it, we don't know," Cannon said. "There may not be a why. He might not even know a why."

★★★★★
FLORIDA'S sea turtles are grappling with a gender imbalance due to climate change. Heat waves have caused the sand to get so hot that nearly every turtle born was female.

★★★★★
NEW York's crimewave has become so lousy a store in Midtown has taken to locking up Spam. Shoppers expressed disbelief after discovering the €4 meat behind lock and key.

★★★★★
AND FINALLY... A GUY at Norm's dog park has been working for the Department of Labour overseeing unemployment benefits. After being laid off last week, Paul said, "it's ironic when you get fired. I still had to come in to the office the next day."



SHANNON ESTUARY STORM

'Alumina monstrosity is scar on our landscape'

SLUDGE: Aughinish Alumina on banks of the Shannon, and (right) Melina Sharp protesting at Dail against the plant owned by Russian company Rusal



FEARS OVER TOWERING 'RED MUD' WASTE AT AUGHINISH

A COMMUNITY living in the shadow of 'towering monstrosity' Aughinish Alumina has called for a public inquiry into its possible health and environmental impacts.

The Aughinish Alumina plant was built on the Limerick bank of the Shannon in 1983 and is now the biggest bauxite refinery in Europe producing 1.9 million tonnes of alumina a year.

With that output comes 50-75 million tonnes of rising 'red mud' stored in open pits near two protected nature sites.

The lake of mud covers a 450-acre site next to the Shannon Estuary.

Aughinish Alumina's parent company, Rusal, applied to An Bord Pleanála for planning permission last December to raise the maximum height of the mud lake where the bauxite residue is disposed of to 44 metres.

They also hope to raise the level of its hazardous salt cake to 35 metres.

Locals fear rock blasting at a new 'borrow hole' on Aughinish Island could send that waste sliding into the sea, sparking an environmental catastrophe.

Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska is the refinery's biggest shareholder but it is understood former Swiss owner Glencore is in talks to retake the factory after raw material shortages sparked by the Ukraine war.



IMPACT: (l-r) Campaigners Tim Hannon and Emanuela Ferrari of Futureproof Clare

■ Shauna CORR & Eithne DODD

Tim Hannon, who lives five miles as the crow flies from the Rusal-owned refinery, said life in the area has changed from his father's generation to his.

Fishing

"I live on the Clare side of the estuary, directly opposite the refinery and it towers, like a monstrosity, over all around it," he explained.

"It is a scar on our landscape. I would be very fond of fishing with my uncle and father and he remembers the Shannon Estuary in the late 1970s.

"Since it's been industrialised, the impact that has had on the community has made it a

far less enjoyable place to spend time in.

"The Aughinish saga has been ongoing for over 20 years. We are calling for an immediate public inquiry into Aughinish Alumina and for the immediate cancellation for Rusal's licence to rock blast."

Futureproof Clare's Emanuela Ferrari said they protested outside the Dáil last week to object to the expansion.

"They are trying to expand containment of a by-product of their operation," she added.

"They are blasting rock beside it to build the containment wall just 10 metres from the Shannon Estuary which is a really delicate ecosystem of incredible beauty. We just can't take that risk."

Rusal sent a letter to residents on June 27, saying it planned to start blasting rock on the same day locals were protesting at the Dáil, June 28.

The Environmental Protection Agency approved their application in January to remove 374,000m³ of rock from a 4.5 hectare pit over a 10-year period with blasting up to seven times a year.

Latest concerns follow tensions in the 1990s when farmers said the plant impacted

both the health of their families and herds.

The government's Askeaton Investigation concluded the plant was "unlikely" to impact human and animal health, the environment, soil and herbage.

An EPA spokesperson said: "The impact of any pollutants on protected areas is considered prior to the issuing of any licence."

They also said the licence is designed to "ensure there is no impact on nearby protected areas" and they "enforce" compliance to "avoid and minimise such impacts".

Proximity

The National Parks and Wildlife Service said it is "not aware of any specific issues in relation to its proximity to the plant".

It did not respond to questions about the European rating for the SAC and designated bird sanctuary.

Aughinish Alumina did not respond to requests for a comment.

In April, Enterprise Minister Leo Varadkar tried to save 400 jobs at the Limerick plant by exempting Aughinish Alumina from Russian sanctions after the Ukrainian ambassador called for its closure.



SHARES: Russian oligarch Deripaska

ECOLOGY IN PERIL

BOG STANDARD

Peatland put at risk by forester's replanting policy



UP FOR AWARD: Fionn Ferreira may have solution to rid plastic

AN Irish chemist vying for a prestigious inventors award says his game changing plan to remove microplastics from the sea came to him when he was just 15.

Fionn Ferreira (22) will find out if he has won the Young Investors Prize 2023 for his solution to the worldwide crisis this July.

But the West Cork man said even if he doesn't scoop the prize, he's determined to deliver his solution to the 51 trillion microplastic particles the UN says are in our seas.

Currently researching at the North Pole, Fionn said: "What's really driven me has been growing up in Schull in West Cork and seeing so much plastic on the shorelines, which made me very angry from a young age."



SCREAMS: April Boyes Sailor's terror as orca pack rammed ship

A WOMAN has told how her boat was wrecked by killer whales in the Med.

April Boyes (31) claimed the animals repeatedly rammed her 66ft yacht for over an hour off the coast of Gibraltar.

In a video of the incident, British sailor Boyes can be heard screaming as the whales destroy the rudder and pierce the hull.

A male crew member told Spanish coastguards: "We need help immediately... we are sinking."

The British-flagged vessel was towed to Spain.

There have been at least 20 orca attacks on boats in the area this month alone.

The creatures are said to have been taught how to attack by a female orca called White Gladis that was left traumatised by a collision with a boat.

EXCLUSIVE

■ Shauna CORR

NOT long after several EU countries sent representatives to Dublin to discuss peatland restoration, semi-state forester Coillte has planted new saplings on "blanket bog" close to the capital.

Teagasc's soil map for the Brockagh area of the Wicklow Mountains defines the land use as "blanket bog".

But *The Star* recently visited the area to find vast swathes of forest that once stood there had been clearfelled and replanted with tiny sitka spruce that will take around 25 years to grow, and some native trees.

The site, which sits just below a National Parks and Wildlife Service peatland restoration project, is still being drained.

The road laid through it was made with apparent construction waste littered with plastic, wiring and metal.

Coillte recently told *The Star* they "no longer plant trees in deep peat sites because there is better understanding today about the carbon emission risk of planting these soils".

But after visiting Brockagh with concerned local Ashley Glover, they said this only applies to new planting — not replanting.

Problem

Ashley said: "If we keep planting on peat soil we are making the problem worse."

"Replanting it puts it into another 30-year-cycle of the same problem and that's something our kids are going to have to resolve."

"I agree with planting sitka spruce. It's a great fast growing crop but it's grim for biodiversity and we don't need to be planting it in the best bits of Ireland."

Coillte's Managing Director of Forestry, Mark Carlin, said: "We have a lot of peatland forests."

"Most of the peatland forests were planted in the great expansion of forests in Ireland in the 50s and 60s... and then into the 90s as well to a lesser extent in peatland."

"It was done at that point as a social initiative to create

CONSERVATION ISSUES: The Brockagh area of the Wicklow Mountains (also inset)



rural employment and also to create an asset in what people thought at that stage was barren, almost desert, of no value, in terms of our peatlands.

"The science and the knowledge changed and we realised what an important asset deep peat is, not only from a biodiversity point of view but also from a climate point of view in the amount of carbon it locks up."

"We understood at that stage if you drain deep peat the carbon dioxide is emitted into the air and it becomes an emission risk."

Coillte has 440,000 hectares of forest across Ireland, 135,000 hectares of which is on deep peat soils.

While some areas are managed for biodiversity and tourism, many are used to harvest wood — around 30 per cent of which is exported.

Deep

Mark said they "don't plant any new forests on deep peat" but admits they are replanting peatlands that have been clearfelled as it is "forestry regulations that if you fell trees, you have to replant trees".

The Department for Agri-

culture, Food and the Marine were asked whether they plan to change that given we now know the impact planting on peat has.

They did not respond to our questions.

Coillte's forestry lead Mark said: "One of our biggest challenges is what we do with the forests that are already planted in deep peat."

He said they can either remove the trees and re-wet the bog, remove the conifers and re-wild it or continue to

harvest the wood and replant with conifers.

Mark went onto to say they make the decision based on the "dynamics of carbon dioxide and methane".

He argued that when peatlands are drained, that planting on them sequesters carbon dioxide.

But trees planted in bog don't do that as well as those in mineral soils and it takes around 15 years for them to make any real difference, he revealed.

When asked for specifics around the decision made at Brockagh which has been replanted considering peatland is being restored, he said: "I can't comment on that site."



WARNING: Local Ashley Glover

For peat's sake..

EXCLUSIVE
BY SHAUNA CORR
Environment Correspondent

COILLTE has planted new saplings on a "blanket bog" just half an hour from the capital.

It comes not long after several EU countries sent representatives to Dublin to discuss peatland restoration.

Bogs act as carbon sinks, but if degraded they emit the greenhouse gas stored in them.

Teagasc's soil map for the Brockagh area of the Wicklow Mountains defines the land use as "blanket bog".

On a visit to the site we found vast swathes of forest that once stood there had been clearfelled and replanted with tiny sitka spruce, that will take around 25 years to grow, and some native trees.

The site, which sits just below a National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) peatland restoration project, is still being drained and the road laid through it was littered with what appeared to be some construction debris, plastic, wiring and metal.

Semi-state forester Coillte recently told us they "no longer plant trees in deep peat sites because there is better understanding today about the carbon emission risk of planting these soils".

But after the Irish Mirror visited Brockagh with concerned local Ashley Glover, they said this applies to new planting not replanting.

Ashley said: "If we keep planting on peat soil we are making the problem worse."

"Replanting it puts it into another 30-year cycle of the same problem and that's something our kids or our grandkids are going to have to resolve."

"I agree with planting sitka spruce. It's a great fast growing crop but it's grim for biodiversity and we don't need to be planting it in the best bits of Ireland in the hills and in and around protected areas."

Coillte's Managing Director of Forestry Mark Carlin told us: "We have a lot of peatland forests."

EXPANSION

"Most of the peatland forests were planted in the great expansion of forests in Ireland in the 50s and 60s and then into the 90s as well to a lesser extent in peatland."

"The science and the knowledge changed and we realised what an important asset deep peat is, not

» Coillte puts new saplings on blanket bog : » Fear damage will see carbon dioxide release



GROWING CYCLE
Sitka spruce saplings planted at Brockagh in the Wicklow Mountains

“ Degraded peatland emits carbon, restored peatland stores carbon ”

ALICE-MARY HIGGINS
INDEPENDENT SENATOR

only from a biodiversity point of view but also from a climate point of view in the amount of carbon it locks up. We understood at that stage if you drain deep peat the carbon dioxide is emitted into the air and it becomes an emission risk."

Coillte has 440,000 hectares of forest across Ireland, 135,000 hectares on deep peat soils.

Mr Carlin argues that when peatlands are drained planting on them sequesters carbon dioxide.

He continued: "We are looking at it over the long term. How fast are the trees sequestering carbon dioxide versus how fast the bog is emitting carbon dioxide." He also

said it is forestry regulations that "if you fell trees, you have to replant trees".

We asked the Department for Agriculture, which oversees forestry, whether they plan to change that given we now know the impact planting on peat has. But despite numerous requests over two weeks they did not respond.

In relation to the construction waste used to build the bog road, Mark said: "There is no waste that goes into our roads. In this case we've used a quarry and the

WORRIED
Ashley Glover

construction rubble that goes in there is licensed and provided to us from a quarry."

Wicklow County Council told us: "This matter should be raised with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine as [it] is the single consent authority for applications for forest road works licences."

We asked the Department for Housing, which oversees NPWS, if they plan to take peatland from Coillte to

restore it. A spokesperson said: "NPWS does not have powers to take land from Coillte."

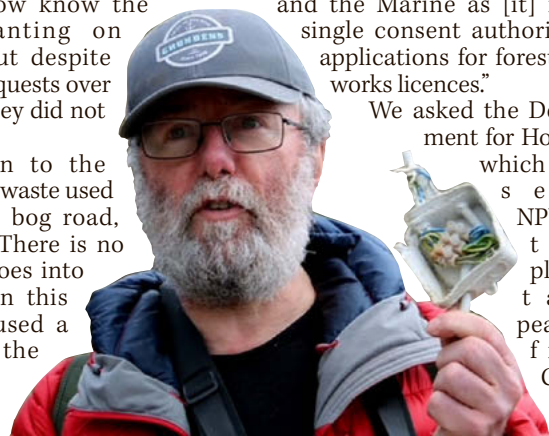
We also asked if the ongoing drainage below their restoration project was having an impact and if they have a management plan in place for Wicklow National Park.

They replied: "The work on the restoration area is ongoing and the NPWS is monitoring how that is progressing"

Alice-Mary Higgins, whose Mandate for Nature Bill passed its second stage at the Seanad last week, said: "One of the quickest most effective ways of climate action is the rewetting and restoration of our peatlands."

"Degraded peatland emits carbon, restored peatland stores carbon."

news@irishmirror.ie



REACH FOR ZERO
SOLUTIONS FOR THE CLIMATE CRISIS

WIRE BOUNDARIES

A GREEN OFFENCE

Ecologist's wildlife zone concerns



DESPERATE: Child digging for water out in Kenya

DEADLY DIG FOR WATER...

CHILDREN carefully scoop water from the bottom of holes they have dug deep in the scorched riverbed.

They tip the precious liquid into white and yellow containers ready for their mums to take home. Without it they will die.

The water may contain deadly cholera but it's their only chance.

At this time of the year the River Baragoi in northern Kenya is usually in full flow and villagers have long used it for drinking, cooking and washing.

But not any more. In villages near the town of Baragoi, locals now have to dig to find the water they need to survive — and it can be dangerous work.

In one community four people stood on each other's shoulders to pass water up. But the hole collapsed, killing them.

Water-holes used for centuries have either dried up or become disease-ridden puddles.

Anna Leaburia (82), is painfully thin. She remembers the time when water was plentiful.

She said: "I'm an old woman and I've never seen a situation like this. When we were young there was plenty of water and food. It's terrible. The worst ever."

"Times have changed so much. I only eat one meal a day and never any meat. Our people are suffering."

Yesterday, *The Star* reported how East Africa is facing its worst drought since the Live Aid appeal in 1985, with 140 million people struggling to survive.

One person dies every 30 seconds due to the devastating drought. As children no older than eight or nine scoop out water in the

■ **Andy LINES**

three holes next to each other they start to play a water game, spraying themselves.

One mum gently chides them, telling them how valuable water is.

A girl, using a red coffee mug as a scoop, has placed her blue sandals with the words "LoveLoveLove" next to the container.

Another girl, using a bowl, is wearing a pink Hello Kitty dress donated by a charity.

They dig for hours on end.

Joe Mbalu, of the Kenya Red Cross, explained:

"This is the only way families can get water."

"Women and children sit in the middle of the barren riverbed each day and dig. They are perhaps one metre down."

The water is not clean but it's all they've got.

"Come August and September those children will be in holes as deep as three or four metres."

"That's what they have to do to get water and stay alive."

Cholera, which is one of the region's biggest killers, is also in the water but it is currently at low levels.

Joe said: "If the levels increase we would warn locals. But we cannot force them to stop digging." Areas such as Lomirok have faced six failed rainy seasons in a row, which experts have blamed on climate change.

Despite the huge death toll, the UN has yet to declare an official famine.

Mpatin has seven wives and three children but is often hungry and thirsty.

He said: "I only survive because of family. Water shortages have killed all of our livestock."

■ **Shauna CORR**

PEOPLE across Ireland have been using all sorts of methods to mark the boundaries of their land for years.

But the low stone walls and nature friendly trees and hedgerows that once criss-crossed our countryside have morphed into high, hard wire mesh fences installed so tight to the ground, not even a rat could nose through.

And these wildlife barriers are now being installed along greenways, in vital wildlife zones around rivers and to outline premises even in supposedly special areas of conservation.

Ecofact ecologist, William O'Connor, has raised major concerns about the impact on ecosystems that find themselves cut into inaccessible sections as a result.

He told us: "There's a major problem with greenways in general."

"My big problem is a lot of these greenways are being put in the riparian area [zones near rivers] and then there's fences put on because farmers, and rightly so, don't want loose dogs leaving the greenway and going on to their land."

"They are often along river corridors where you have the last relics of biodiversity."

"This land is essentially worthless for farming but it is essential refuge for biodiversity and provides important habitat for rare and wild plant species, insects, otters and other fauna like that, nesting birds and kingfishers."

Mr O'Connor also questioned the value of Environmental Impact Assessment screening reports on greenway planning applications.

We looked at the Tralee to Fenit Greenway and the Great Southern Greenway from Limerick to Kerry, the Dodder Greenway in Dublin and the Newcastle Woods Greenway along Longford's River Inny.

We have seen EIA screenings in the first three cases, where planners decided an Environmental Impact Assessment Report was not needed, but could not locate the same document for the latter during research.

Longford County Council did not respond to our request for the information



AS temperatures soar, weather patterns change and more and more species become a distant memory, humanity faces a grave fight for survival. That's why on Earth Day

last week *The Star* launched a new weekly page in our paper dedicated to the environment, biodiversity, climate crisis, our Reach for Zero emissions and a sustainable future where both us and the

species we share the world with can thrive.

We promise factual stories about the challenges ahead and how we got here, but more importantly what we can do about it.

before publication.

"All they are really doing for these greenways is an environmental impact assessment report screening which basically assesses whether a project requires an environmental impact assessment under the EIA directive or not," added Mr O'Connor.

Horrendous

"Unless you are building a major motorway across the country you almost certainly won't want an EIAR, so it's a totally worthless document."

"Legally they have to do it because green-

ways are technically roads but most of the screenings would be way below the threshold of requiring a full formal EIA."

But he added: "Any development can cause ecological impact."

The Great Southern Greenway from Limerick to Kerry is one of the biggest greenways in the country and they did not do any environmental impact assessments for that.

"I know a lot of it runs along an existing railway track and that's fine - but if you don't use the track for 50 years... these areas are rewilded."

IRISH DAILY
Mirror
COMMENT

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irishmirror.ie

Last Ditch attempt to avoid quiz

OUR politicians have always been adept at the art of distraction and avoiding simple questions put to them.

But Tanaiste Micheal Martin brought it to a new level in the Dail on Thursday.

Rather than answer some fairly straightforward questioning from opposition TDs about one of his Fianna Fail junior ministers, Niall Collins, Mr Martin decided on the distraction route.

He embarked on a tirade about the online publication, The Ditch, and doubled down on it yesterday.

It seems to have provided the Tanaiste a handy excuse to ignore any questioning around the performance of his party.

Meanwhile, as Martin continued with his crusade yesterday, back in the real world, the latest homeless figures emerged to show how that crisis is getting worse than ever.

There are now a record 11,988 declared as homeless in this country.

This has happened on Micheal Martin's watch, as lest we forget he was the Taoiseach for the first two-and-a-half years of our current coalition's reign.

It's shameful that what has clearly been an emergency for a long time now has been left to fester, with many people suffering the consequences.

This is what our Tanaiste should really be getting hot and bothered about.

Heed advice on road safety

THE deaths of three people in a horror crash in Tyrone on Thursday should serve as a wake up call to everyone this weekend.

The cause of the accident remains under investigation, so it is not possible at this point to state what happened.

But as a general rule, inappropriate speed remains a major factor in road accidents.

This usually entails going far too fast on rural roads not meant for it, with devastating results.

Every year, calls for motorists to slow down go unheeded, with four dead on last year's May bank holiday weekend alone.

Will this be the year that call is heeded?

Tom Shelpee..

TOMMY Shelby's gang keep razor blades in their caps to fend off rivals.

But Cillian Murphy showed himself more infallible than his on-screen persona as he got caught short in Soho.

A different type of slash then.



ALERT
William O'Connor

BY **SHAUNA CORR**
Environment Correspondent

PEOPLE across Ireland have been using all sorts of methods to mark the boundaries of their land for years.

But the low stone walls and nature friendly trees and hedges that once criss-crossed our countryside have morphed into high, hard wire mesh fences.

And some are installed so tight to the ground, not even a rat could nose through.

And these wildlife barriers are now being installed along greenways, in wildlife zones around rivers and to outline premises in special areas of conservation.

Ecofact ecologist William O'Connor has raised concerns about the impact on ecosystems that find themselves cut into inaccessible sections as a result.

He said: "There's a major problem with greenways in general.

"My big problem is a lot of these greenways are being put in the riparian area [zones near rivers] and then there's fences put on because farmers, and rightly so, don't want loose dogs leaving the greenway and going on to their land.

"They are often along river corridors where you have the last relics of biodiversity.

"This land is essentially worthless for farming but it is essential refuge for biodiversity and provides important habitat for rare and wild plant species, insects, otters and other fauna like that, nesting birds and kingfishers."

Mr O'Connor also questioned the value of Environmental Impact Assessment screening reports on greenway planning applications.

We looked at the Tralee to Fenit Greenway and the Great Southern Greenway from Limerick to Kerry, the Dodder Greenway in Dublin and the Newcastle Woods Greenway along Longford's River Inny.

REPORT

We have seen EIA screenings in the first three cases, where planners decided an Environmental Impact Assessment Report was not needed.

But could not locate the same document for the latter. Longford County Council did not respond to our request for the information. Mr O'Connor added: "Any

An offence to wildlife..

Ecologist tells of his concern at fences near to greenways



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“There's a major problem with greenways”
WILLIAM O'CONNOR ON THE RESULTS OF PLANS

development can cause ecological impact.

"Then you have these long fences blocking wildlife movement.

"Otters often have their other holes in the riparian areas where these greenways are going and no assessments are being done. They have actually been recorded a kilometre back from rivers as they want their dwelling to be back from flood land.

"You build a greenway along the river and then you've cut them off." The number of green-

ways across the country has risen from 13 in 2019 to around 70 projects, at various stages of development, according to Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

We asked the Department for Transport if they gave councils any stipulations to projects in terms of biodiversity protection.

A spokesperson said: "The Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways sets out the general requirements in terms of greenways and the environment and biodiversity.

"The strategy specifically states that proposed greenways should examine their potential to

provide enhancement measures for the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020."

A 2022 report by WIRED, found the boom in fences is harming wildlife as it impedes migration, isolates threatened species and furthers the spread of disease.

Wenjing Xu, a PhD student at the University of California, Berkeley, said: "There is evidence that wildlife numbers have really decreased with the increase in fences. It's a tragedy."

Ms Xu is a co-author of a 2020 BioScience paper which called fences "the wires that shape the world".