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Greetings!

The key message I would like to make in my submission is that what is lost is lost for all time, lost to all future generations, lost to the world.

Can you imagine if Galway's centuries old Claddagh fishing village had not been wiped away in the 30s? It would now be a World Heritage Site. People were not thinking that way at the time.

I implore you to put in place serious protection for our heritage, nature and the landscape, which is good for man in so many ways.

We have inherited a largely unspoiled country, exceptional in the developed world, a treasure to be appreciated and protected. This treasure can also generate prosperity for people living here. But if we ruin it, all is lost.

We have an astoundingly beautiful landscape and rich heritage but we are a small island in world terms and could so easily be spoiled.

The world's population is growing rapidly and people are fleeing other territories. We must prepare to welcome and accommodate more humans and at the same time prevent the destruction of habitat of other creatures and species. We have to be aware of our island's fragility and vulnerability. This will require really stringent protection with really serious repercussions for those who transgress. One thoughtless individual can wipe away thousands of years of heritage for all time.

For the good of man also, we must make the protection of nature and heritage an absolute cornerstone of future planning, not an optional add on.

Because nature is an essential element in man's wellbeing, we must ensure that nature is accessible for all people, poor and rich, urban and rural. Nature must not be pushed further and further away from our children. Nature in the city must be promoted and encouraged. Nature pockets must feature everywhere, for man and wildlife.

All buildings, particularly large developments must offer some element of nature to all, to the passerby and the resident.

In building upwards, aspect must be paramount, so that cities do not become cold, gloomy places. This can be cleverly done, allowing light to fall through the streets and make for happier citizens.

Scale is of the utmost importance in all developments. Several small developments are preferable to vast monstrosities. Incorporate old characterful buildings instead of wiping them away.

New developments must not be allowed to overshadow old villages and communities.

Extensive hard surfacing and the paving over of front gardens must be discouraged.

Parkland, trees and gardens, including the opportunity to work in gardens, must be accessible to all.

We must not permit buildings that just surface over the earth giving nothing back. This is also a serious consideration in the downpours that are the consequence of climate change.

Buildings must not be hard, cold, sharp and excluding to those on the streets; there must be an element of shelter and beauty both in architecture and planting at street level for all to enjoy.

We must keep humanity at the core of every plan. Public buildings in the future could offer 24 hour shelter in warm foyers.

The concept of low maintenance must be done away with. Maintenance gives employment; a place is tended to, cared for.

Introduce car-less laneways with native trees and flowers around schools so children can be away from toxic fumes.

Have mixed generation housing so elders can enjoy the coming and going of little ones.

Offer incentives for larger houses to incorporate different generations independently.

Social housing must include opportunities for creative endeavour. People cannot be boxed up without the opportunity to be creative, whether it be allotments or workshops or art spaces.

All towns and villages should have a covered market place.

Repopulate with pride the centres of beautiful towns like Gort and Ballinasloe creatively using existing buildings of character. Protect old laneways and mews buildings.

Run courses in old crafts like limeplastering, stonemasonry and heritage carpentry.

All around the country the iconic stone towers and castles are crumbling and collapsing. They will soon be gone. Immediately introduce a scheme just to arrest the decay at this stage, just to hold them for future generations.

Protect the countryside from over-illumination.

All through the country recreate little woods of native trees. Surround all pylons with low growing trees.

Protect trees and hedgerows with strong penalties for destruction. If there is to be a development on rural land seriously encourage the protection and incorporation of existing hedgerows, stone walls and trees, rather than their replacement with alien materials and species. Setback has introduced some really awful things into the countryside.

Protect our eskers. Have Esker walkways as they were used in olden times.

GALWAY

In Galway in particular, there is a beautiful area within the city boundary called Letteragh. There is an ancient network of old stone walled fields, hilly farmsteads and hedgerows that in my opinion ought to be protected and not lost to development. Once lost, it is lost for all time. Such places on the edge of urban development all around the country should be identified and preserved. By doing so we can protect heritage and wildlife and keep nature close to our citizens.

Within Galway city the old area of Bohermore offers a rich opportunity for the preservation of historic vernacular buildings. The places we are happiest are the places that still hold the story of the past. The old need not be wiped away. It can stand gently alongside the new. Who knows what has been ripped out behind medieval facades in Galway for the construction of nightclubs. Gone for all time.

We must engage and empower heritage officers to actively identify and protect our heritage buildings. Carry out a countrywide inventory of places of particular beauty, heritage value, and vistas for serious long term protection not at the mercy of whatever councillors happen to think at a certain moment. Woodland and meadows at Merlin Park which were to be protected are now to be built on because the building is to be a hospice. Understandably councillors felt this was the right thing to do but again, what is lost is lost for all time, to everyone.

In Moycullen village, Co. Galway there is a wonderful vista looking towards the lake and across to Knock Ma that I believe ought to be preserved..

It should be essential that planning considerations be looked at actually on the ground by diverse eyes. Who could stand by the Corrib river across from Menlo Castle and think that a major road and bridge running through there is a good idea. While on paper far away it appears a good solution. There must be other possibilities.

All engineers and those involved in construction ought to have to do heritage studies so they might appreciate that what they see as a disposable obstacle has enormous value to society in the big picture.

Transport is an enormous issue but at a local level it is remarkable that there is little or no regular public

transport from villages like Moycullen and Barna to the city so people must travel by car.

Wind farms are clearly one option for renewable energy but it does not seem right to me that windmills have been dotted piecemeal around the Moycullen/Barna area in areas of Special Conservation spoiling the most extraordinarily beautiful Atlantic views for what level of output?

WATER

Start a wonderful friendly campaign for children at school to encourage the conservation of water.

i.e. child dancing in the rain "This is free and we have lots of it" followed by child running tap "This is not, it cost a lot of money which could be spent on...playgrounds, hospitals, library books, sports equipment..."

Give incentives to harvest rainwater.

Give every household a big enamel jug to salvage yesterday's kettle water, the first run of the tap etc. for watering plants etc. Make a virtue of water thrift.

Capture children's imaginations about the wonder of our local heritage, natural world and environment. Educate, educate, educate. Keep schools relatively small and gentle. Children are small.

Remember scale.

For too long progress and prosperity have been pitted against nature and beauty. Our nature and our beauty are our prosperity, in financial as well as spiritual terms. We have a beautiful country and by keeping it beautiful we become a beautiful people. Destroying it we become ugly too. Let's be beautiful!

Thank you very much,

Gia Griffiths Howard