R E P O R T

Green Foundation Ireland

invites you to an evening online TALK

with Aidan ffrench,

Past President of the Irish Landscape Institute

URBAN FORESTRY –
A 'Minority Sport' in Ireland?

Photo by: AIDAN ffRENCH

Venue: **by Zoom** ***(details given after registration)***

Wednesday 22 February 2024 – 19:00 to 20:00

Admission to this event is FREE but you MUST register beforehand.
You can do so through our Eventbrite page.

URBAN FORESTRY – A 'Minority Sport' in Ireland?

THEME

This talk explored aspects about the importance of urban forestry in Ireland, as well as common pitfalls in urban forestry implementation, and the need for improved legislature on the right to urban greenery. It also included a discussion about the following:

- Ethics (Co-Habitation), Co-Design.
- Active Citizenship and NGOs.
- Health/Wellbeing, Climate, Biodiversity.
- Gaps: Policy, Law, Resources.

ABOUT OUR SPEAKER

Aidan ffrench

A past president of the **Irish Landscape Institute** (ILI), Aidan led a distinct rise in the profession's growth and national profile between 2005-2009, being the first landscape architect on Ireland's leading current affairs radio show, *Morning Ireland* (RTÉ Radio 1). In 2007 he wrote the ILI's *'Manifesto for Irish Landscapes',* which called on the state to make serious commitments to landscape and parks policy, legislation and the profession. The lobbying efforts of the ILI and its allies ultimately led to the first legal definition of 'landscape' in Irish law (2010).

Aidan is active in advocating for Landscape Architecture and quality Urban Placemaking in Ireland, with a strong focus on Nature-based Solutions. He is an active volunteer member of several environmental NGOs, having spoken at Irish and international conferences, and written articles for several journals, including CRANN and Village magazines.

ABOUT OUR FACILITATOR

Ciaran Monahan

Ciaran, who is part of our Management Team at Green Foundation Ireland, is a postdoctoral researcher in University College Dublin. His research interests include education, environmental risk assessment, and food safety. He has completed a number of works for GFI, including an analysis of sustainability topics in the Leaving Certificate, as well as event hosting.

ABOUT OUR TALK

Ciaran Monahan welcomed everyone and introduced **Aidan ffrench**, who began by outlining the structure of the talk, which was to cover the basics of urban forestry, strategies to implement urban forestry, community-led projects, and challenges for the movement.

The talk centred on the benefits that the presence of urban forestry and green spaces can provide to both humans and wildlife. Trees contribute to a sense of belonging, rootedness, and feeling at home. The role of urban forestry included creating social equity – that everyone should have access to green spaces, and not just the wealthy. Aidan stressed that policy should be put in place to allow everyone access to the health benefits of urban forests.

He emphasised the importance of moving from "the age of ego" to "the age of eco", as well as the importance of not just centring human wellbeing, but the flourishing of different forms of life. He discussed the need to think of trees as living beings, and not just as decorations.

Aidan continued by using a diagram of European cities to demonstrate the high rate of tree loss in cities across the continent. Competition for space in urban spaces is high, with many different land-use needs competing for limited space, meaning that urban spaces may lose out on forestry, as it is not considered very profitable. There are several reasons for this, one of which being the way trees are planted causing damage to their bark and, thus, death of the tree. Aidan drew attention to the fact that Ireland has no national policy on urban forestry, and that promises made are not delivered on.

Examples were given of community-based work in establishing green spaces, demonstrating that the political will exists to propel the urban forestry movement forward, and that there is hope for the future.

The response to this topic was high, with almost 90 people expressing an interest in the talk and over 40 people attending. Conversation was extremely involved, with many questions being asked, primarily regarding urban forestry policy in Ireland and abroad, as well as actions that can be taken by Irish citizens to further the cause. Roughly 35 minutes of discussion took place, with many attendees engaging in discussion on their previous work with urban greenery movements.

*You can **access our video of the talk here**.*

Green Foundation Ireland ***9 April 2024***