 feasta



Annual Review 2010

Feasta, the Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability, aims to identify the characteristics (economic, cultural and environmental) of a truly sustainable society, articulate how the necessary transition can be effected, and promote the implementation of the measures required for this purpose.

*Cad a dhéanfaimid feasta gan adhmaid? Tá deireadh
ne gcoillte ar lár
What will we do in the future without wood? The end
of the forests has come*

the year: 2010

JOHN JOPLING

Feasta's mission statement describes a three-fold role - thinking, communicating our ideas and promoting implementation.

The year 2010 saw much activity of all three kinds - not that they are separate activities. The thinking is done by any of Feasta's approximately 230 members, following their own interests and expertise, working alone or in groups of varying sizes, often working with people from other organisations, and by guests invited to give lectures or lead seminars, all within the general Feasta field of economic systems designed for environmental sustainability and social justice. The communicating is through lectures, books and other publications, and the Feasta website www.feasta.org. Promoting implementation is through the work of government funded projects such as those active in 2010, the Smart Taxes Network, the Carbon Cycles and Sinks Network and the Carbon Social Credit Scheme; and also by support for initiatives based on ideas developed within Feasta, such as the Liquidity Network.

Just as the main event in 2009 was the three-day conference called The New Emergency, in which 20 speakers explored the nature of the multiple crises facing the world and responses to it, the major event in 2010 was the publication of *Fleeing Vesuvius* in which 29 authors (including most of the contributors to the earlier conference) looked at very much the same issues. Launched in Dublin by Father Sean McDonagh on 20 November and described as a "goldmine" by Richard Heinberg in his foreword to the North American edition, *Fleeing Vesuvius* is Feasta's most important work to date. It draws together many of the ideas developed within Feasta over the years and applies them to a single question: how can we bring the world out of the mess in which it now finds itself? The conventional answer - even more eco-

conomic growth - is seen in the book as part of the problem rather than the solution.

Feasta's annual lecturers over the ten years since it was founded have included many of the world's leading thinkers on the economics of sustainability. Today, as Feasta members have been predicting for years, the systemic flaws of the current economic system are leading inexorably to the collapse of the global economy. Noone is clearer on the reasons for this than Feasta's 2010 annual lecturer, the energy consultant and financial blogger Nicole Foss ("Stoneleigh"): in her lecture she explained precisely why the combi-

ing with the impact of the predicted collapse of mainstream systems.

Most Feasta members share not only an extremely pessimistic view of the prospects for the global economy so long as it continues on its present path but also extreme concern about the consequences of climate change for the whole of humanity and many other species and the failure of existing governmental structures to address the crisis. The year 2010 opened in the knowledge that Copenhagen had failed and ended with the inevitable failure at Cancun. The response of individual governments, including Ireland's, has generally been wholly in-

“ *thinking, communicating our ideas
and promoting implementation* ”

nation of peak oil and global Ponzi finance is bound to bring to an end the world of economic growth that everyone in the mainstream is intent on perpetuating.

The activities of Feasta members summarised below reflect two possible options open to people who share this understanding. One is to initiate projects organised on sound principles, initiating change from the bottom up. The Liquidity Network falls into this category. The other option is to bring principles of sustainable economics to the attention of people in positions that enable them to make use of them. Into this category come the government funded projects referred to above. Others such as Risk Resilience combine both strategies. Feasta's ongoing participation with the Environmental Pillar of Social Partnership is another.

Using these two strategies Feasta members have addressed a range of fundamental issues, from the way money is created and the design of tax and subsidy systems, to ways of cop-

adequate. Feasta members have been constructive: work continued within both the formal Carbon Cycles and Sinks project and the informal Feasta Climate Group as described below. The inability of the current governmental structures to achieve an effective response to climate change is seen as systemic: the remedy therefore lies in changing the system. One idea now being promoted is to initiate change by introducing a new player on the international stage, a Global Climate Commons Trust which would take, or rather create for itself, a new leading role in the world community's response to climate change, with climate justice at the heart of the system.

In addition to the 'main activities' briefly reported on below, there are always a number of marginal activities, with Feasta sometimes acting as a catalyst for or champion of other's work. One strong thinker Feasta has championed is Allan Savory, Feasta's 2009 annual lecturer, who together with The Africa Centre for Holistic Management won the 2010 Buckmin-

ster Fuller Award.

Notable events organised by Feasta in 2010 included the lecture by Albert Bates on Biochar on 7 August and the evening with Vinay Gupta on 27th September. Further details can be seen on the website.

So much activity: how is it all organised? The answer is by very few people, many of them unpaid. Responsibility for managing Feasta's day to day affairs rests with an executive committee appointed by Feasta's board of directors. The EC generally meets once a month. The agenda is invariably heavy. During the year Sean Conlon was invited to lead a number of Revisioning sessions in order to review the way we work. One outcome was an agreed consensus decision-making process. Another was the realisation that for so much business to be channelled through a single committee of this kind might operate as a bottle neck. The question we were left

with at the end of the year was whether there might not be a better way for Feasta to be organised. Answering that question is the challenge for 2011.

The main activities in 2010 are summarised under the following heads:

- 1) Fleeing Vesuvius
- 2) Smart Taxes
- 3) Carbon Cycles and Sinks
- 4) Carbon Social Credit Scheme
- 5) Risk Resilience
- 6) Liquidity Network
- 7) Climate group
- 8) Cap and Share
- 9) International climate governance
- 10) Food security
- 11) Communications-Website
- 12) Membership
- 13) Management

These reports are based on the information provided by the people involved.

Fleeing Vesuvius

Edited by Richard Douthwaite and Gilian Fallon, *Fleeing Vesuvius* aims to present some of the ideas that Feasta has developed over the years to a wider public, together with some papers prepared

by people who have a similar perspective. Most of the authors presented early versions of their papers at the three-day New Emergency Conference which Feasta organised in summer 2009 but, where the editors considered there were gaps in the range of topics which the conference had been able to cover, or where invited speakers had been unable to come, they commissioned new material.

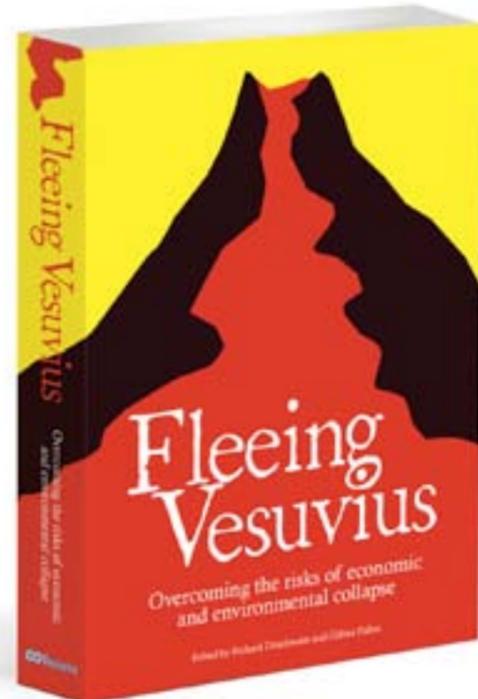
The book represents the combined efforts of 29 contributors and runs to 440 pages. It was launched in Dublin by Fr. Sean McDonagh in late November. As this co-incided with the Irish bail-out, it was this a bad time to launch a book on economic issues as it meant that the commentators we had hoped would write their columns about the book had their attention elsewhere. Only a few brief reviews appeared in the newspapers as a result but other longer and, in some cases, very favourable, reviews have since appeared in magazines and on websites. In early 2011, events to mark the publication of the book will be held in Cork and Galway.

The North American rights to the book were sold in 2010 and it will appear there, in March 2011, with an intro-

duction by Richard Heinberg of the Post Carbon Institute to replace that by the Irish Minister for Energy, Eamon Ryan. The economic prescription for Ireland which concluded the original is also to be replaced by one for the US.

A New Zealand edition of the book is also to appear during 2011 with about 50 pages of local material added to the Feasta content by the NGO, Living Economies, which will bring it out. The Swedish Transition movement is also interested in an edition but the translation costs may prove too high.

The aim for the book in 2011 is to get the issues it raises much more widely discussed. One method will be to publish the book in stages on the Feasta website in conjunction with blogs about it on other sites.



Smart Taxes

Smart Taxes Network develops policy options to reform fiscal and other financial and monetary mechanisms in Ireland to deliver environmental, social and economic sustainability.

In 2010 Smart Taxes concentrated its research on its Funding for Infrastructure project stream. This developed a policy for Site Value Tax, a tax levied on the value of zoned land. Main achievements include hosting of a workshop in March to discuss how Site Value Tax could work, which led to the writing of a detailed Implementation Paper based on these discussions.

In October, Smart Taxes helped co-organise a European Environmental Agency conference with Comhar SDC and the EEA and contributed 3 Site Value Tax presentations.

In June 2010, Smart Taxes began its second year of Department of Environment funding, with a work-plan directed into two streams; Investment for a Secure and Sustainable Future and Environment and Ecosystem Protection. The first of these centres on the potential monetary reform offers for environmental sustainability. The second looks at reform of subsidies and environmental taxation to support sustainable resource management, looking especially at rural land and marine fisheries.

Work in 2010 set the foundations for research in both these fields. Fisheries research was initiated with open meeting on the Fishing Credit System with Marine Conservation Society and Client Earth in August. The Sustain-

able Investment stream was begun with a workshop on the Job Guarantee Scheme in December.

Throughout the year, Smart Taxes responded to policy submission requests as arising, on topics including Waste Management, Renewable Energy and Green Procurement. A budget submission developed the Sustainable Investment ideas into a coherent policy approach on the national and European level.

Until June 2011, Smart Taxes will be concluding research set out in its work-plan. Following this, we will be applying for Year 3 funding to continue along similar lines and further develop our policy options.

Carbon Cycles and Sinks

The Carbon Cycles and Sinks Network (CCSN) was funded by the Department of the Environment in both 2009 and 2010 to develop policies to reduce Ireland's land based greenhouse gas emissions. In 2009 it concentrated on emissions sources in 2010 on emissions sinks, identifying the best ways to get atmospheric carbon taken up by grasslands, forestry, tillage and energy crops. It was also asked to carry out a feasibility study for the construction of a pilot scale commercial pyrolysis plant and to prepare an economic and emissions analysis of the effects of switching grazing land out of beef and into biomass production.

During 2011 it will publish a combined report on the policies it proposes for both emission sources and sinks. In addition, if further funding is approved, it will carry out a study on how value could be added to Irish biomass through the co-production of fuels, chemicals, power and materials. It will also work on developing a "Carbon REPS" introduction by the EU, which will reward farmers for increasing the carbon content of their soils.

During the year CCSN participated in a number of meetings and events, two relating to Biochar (the UKBRC conference at Rothamsted Research

Centre, UK and the seminar by Albert Bates hosted by CCSN and Cultivate) and made 6 written submissions. One submission made in October 2009 to the Working Group on the Cessation of Turf Cutting on Designated Raised Bogs was referred to in their final report in May 2010 which noted the Network's recommendation that a National Bogland Management Agency (NBMA) should be set up to take over and care for bogs already in public ownership and to purchase bogs, particularly those in Special Areas of Conservation and National Heritage Areas. Another recommendation of the Network, that an abatement figure for carbon sequestration in soils from the cessation of turf cutting should be awarded by the competent authorities, led to Group's report recommending that the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government should press for the introduction into the international carbon trading arrangements of a mechanism for allocating credits for preserving peatlands.

Carbon Social Credit Scheme

In December 2010 a consortium led by Feasta was asked to carry out a feasibility study for a Carbon Social Credit Scheme (2CS) by the Dublin Regional Authority (DRA). The proposed scheme envisaged a loyalty system to reward green / local purchasing, carbon reduction and voluntary work in the community in the South Dublin area.

The study team was led by Graham Barnes of Feasta and John Walsh of Dublin based Carbon Decisions with specialist input provided by loyalty and timebanking experts. The study was delivered in April 2011.

The DRA had chosen the South Dublin area around Tallaght for the study because of South Dublin County Council (SDCC)'s reputation for innovation and openness to new ideas.

While the study showed that the business community was keen to sup-

port initiatives to incentivise purchasing of locally produced goods and services and to link this with tangible rewards and recognition for community volunteers, there was a noticeably cool response to the 'green agenda' per se.

As a result, the first follow up activity for SDCC will revolve around providing a solid timebanking infrastructure for two pilot projects - one involving community groups in Fettercairn and the other facilitating volunteer exchange between a group of schools in Adamstown. Businesses will initially be involved by donating goods and services or sponsoring specific volunteer rewards.

In parallel, discussions will continue with the major retailers who have shown an interest in 2CS, with a view to squaring the commercial priorities

of those retailers with the localist 2CS agenda. The study modelled a number of scenarios for financing a South Dublin loyalty programme, and the aim of this line of action is to establish whether a co-operative model is feasible.

Patricia Potter, DRA's Director, said that the study had been immensely helpful in understanding the risks and rewards of combining loyalty with a timebanking/ social credit approach. "We will continue to work with SDCC and the other Dublin councils to facilitate projects such as 2CS which increase local competitiveness and well-being", said Ms Potter "and we thank Feasta and the study team for their excellent work."

Liquidity Network

The Liquidity Network (LQN) group wants to help a largish community such as a county establish a debt-free electronic money system which allows its inhabitants to trade with each other so that its economy is not totally constrained by the availability of the official currency, such as the euro or the pound. The group believes that the more people who are prepared to accept a currency, the more useful it is and consequently, a currency system which starts on too small a scale may not be useful enough to take off and grow to a sufficient size to achieve a worthwhile economic impact, such as increasing local self-sufficiency and resilience.

The group's emphasis in 2010 has been on engaging with localities who have expressed an interest in LQN and where there is a single, cohesive and representative business association and an open-minded and proactive council. However, the dialogues that have taken place in Kilkenny, Dundalk and elsewhere have not yet moved beyond the initial 'expression of interest' stage.

This is partly, no doubt, because of

the newness of the ideas behind LQN - for example that multiple currencies will be normal in future, and that under the right conditions currency can be given into circulation (and / or earned by supporting the currency introduction) with no accompanying debt.

But the LQN group is increasingly aware of the obstacles to innovation within local councils (who play a pivotal role in the LQN's most likely rollout scenario).

For 2011, the group will continue these dialogues, working with localities that express an interest in building local competitiveness through LQN; we will look at opportunities for implementing LQN regimes on the back of new commercial payment and loyalty offerings such as Zapa and Carapay; and we will continue to develop an alternative LQN scenario which we are calling Trade-Trust - a local trading network initially using conventional currency to build

trust and establish reputations before switching to a locally owned currency to increase liquidity.

Finally, the LQN group has noted a dramatically increased level of international organisational and technical innovation in complementary currencies in 2010. We continue to evaluate these developments for their potential to deliver the primary LQN objective of increasing local liquidity. The speed with which the decentralised, peer-to-peer currency bitcoin has grown points to the likely impact of innovative monetary developments in the near future. There is clearly potential for fitting LQN-designed currency allocation methods and governance systems to technology-led monetary developments such as bitcoin.

Risk/Resilience

Risk-Resilience was a project set up in 2010 in order to understand large-scale systemic risk from the convergence of peak oil, peak food, and unstable financial and economic systems. In this it take a whole systems view. the second part of Risk-Resilience's work is to study the scope for risk management, and general and emergency planning.

In March 2010 Tipping Point: Near-term systemic implications of a peak in global oil production was produced.

This report has been widely circulated and commented upon.

Several meetings were held over the year with people involved in infrastructure, finance and public policy regarding emerging risks, and risk management.

In 2011 those meetings will continue. Risk-Resilience is also producing a new report Trade/Off concerning supply-chain implications of a global systemic banking collapse.

Climate Group

The Climate Group's aim is to devise and promote policies which would, if adopted, reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases of all types and which would also lead to a reduction of the level of CO2 currently in the atmosphere, since this is already too high for a stable climate to be maintained.

During 2010, a major part of the group's work was to try to get its Cap and Share proposal for limiting fossil fuel emissions assessed by the UNEP, together with other proposals for limiting climate change which could supplement or replace the present UNFCCC process which many people think is incapable of leading to an effective climate treaty.

Feasta joined with other NGOs, including the Irish Doctors' Environmental Association, to fund a member, Feargal Duff, a former senior UNEP official, to carry out the negotiations and, in June, the then Minister for the Environment, John Gormley, made a formal request to UNEP for the study to be carried out and offered funding for it. The World Resources Institute (WRI) was contracted to carry out the assessment but since then, the rate of progress

has been disappointing and, as far as we know, WRI has not been in direct touch with any of the organisations or individuals who have made proposals which could fall within the ambit of the assessment. This is despite an Irish government "side event" at the UN climate conference in Cancun, Mexico in December at which the project was announced and a report by June 2011 was promised.

The Climate Group's membership is drawn from both sides of the Irish Sea and its annual is held three-day meeting is held in Britain one year, and in Ireland the next. The 2010 meeting was in Forres, Scotland in February. About 20 people attended, paying their own expenses. A wide range of topics is always discussed and decisions made at the 2011 meeting (which was in Cloughjordan in April) will lead to the Group building up its level of expertise in the use of the soil as a carbon sink and in potential control measures for non-CO2 emissions. We expect the level of activity in these areas to increase markedly during the year.

Members from both Britain and Ireland are working on a book about cli-

mate change and climate change policy, with, of course, a lot about Cap and Share. Progress on this was reviewed at the 2011 Climate Group meeting and it will be published in the Autumn.

Food Security

The Food Security Group within Feasta is focused on developing a broader understanding of the threats to food security, and the nature of sustainable food systems. Within this broad topic the group is particularly interested in the development of frameworks and policy options for increasing community food security, and on the issues of resource availability.

The work on food security during 2010 was primarily focused on research into the role of nutrients in food system. Out of this research and exploration, the concept of "Nutritional Resilience" was developed. This concept provides the basis for a more rigorous evaluation of the characteristics of a sustainable food system, the importance of resource availability, and identifying appropriate changes to land management practices.

The concept of nutritional resilience was fully developed in the paper "The Nutritional Resilience Approach to Food Security" which was published in *Fleeing Vesuvius*. These ideas were also presented at a round-table discussion on Food Security at Queens University,



Belfast, and at the "Local Economies, Strong Communities" conference in Kilkenny.

In 2011 and beyond, the group plans to hold workshops which explore the concepts of nutritional resilience with members involved in the Carbon Sinks and Cycles network, and representatives of other NGOs, in order to better understand the link between nutrient

availability and ecosystem resilience/productivity.

The group also plans to work with the Risk and Resilience Network to develop possible strategies for rapid transition to resilient food systems and the requirements of emergency planning for food security in a collapse scenario.

Ireland there are new governments and there is a need to re-present the cap and share idea to the new governments.

In addition the group had a Cap and Share/Feasta presence with a presentation at the Berlin Commons Conference organised by the Heinrich Boell Foundation in November and the group's coordinator Brian Davey participated on behalf of Feasta at the Zukunft's Parliament (Future Parliament) organised by the ESD (European Sustainable Development) in Vienna in December - making contributions in plenary podium discussions and workshops about post growth economics.

This group was developed by members of the Feasta Climate Group to publicise and promote Cap and Share in various policy forums and to the public in general - at national, European and international levels. It was developed as a separate group on the grounds that these activities might exceed Feasta's powers as a charity.

During the year the group worked with Hothouse Theatre to make a short spoof video to promote understanding of Cap and Share. In the style of a James Bond movie (the part where M briefs 007) it explains the underlying principles in a humorous way to 008. The video has been released on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSUuFjAOZUo>)

The group has started dialogue through MEPs with officials at the European Commission. In both Britain and

Communications/Website

The overall goal of the Feasta website group is to disseminate Feasta's ideas as widely as possible and to facilitate discussion about them. To this end we have made almost all of our publications and submissions freely available for download from the site, in addition to a large collection of videos of our lectures.

In 2010 the website group worked mainly on a major overhaul of the main Feasta site, moving most of its contents over to blogging software in order to encourage comments and discussion with visitors to the site, and to streamline it with the sister sites for the Feasta projects (Smart Taxes, Carbon Cycles and Sinks and the Liquidity Network), all of which use the same backend software. Our goal for 2011 was to launch the new site, developing it as a platform for informed commentary on ecological economics with the aim of having at least 3 new articles by Feasta members appear on it each week. We also planned to publish the book *Fleeing Vesuvius* on the site in weekly instalments.

Feasta Management

International Climate Governance

Work was continued on the project of creating a new independent Global Climate Commons Trust to provide humanity with a new structure for tackling the climate crisis, working in cooperation with existing governments and other organisations. A 35-page document identifies the systemic reasons why the structure created by governments in 1992, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Kyoto Protocol which followed in 1997, are ill-designed for the task; and proposes the outline of new structure to implement global schemes to address climate change such as a global Cap and Share scheme. A two page introductory summary was prepared for approaching leading figures whose support was considered necessary to enable this initiative to be implemented.

Staff

Dara McHugh joined Smart Taxes as co-ordinator in June. There were no other staff changes: Morag Friel continued in her role as members' agent, looking after members and doing office administration; Mayra Guerra remained as book keeper; Corinna Byrne as co-ordinator of Carbon Cycles and Sinks project; and Caroline Whyte as website administrator.

Feasta Directors

Sean Conlan of Sligo was elected to the Board of Directors at the AGM. Sean is a lecturer in Sligo IT; involved in Transition Initiatives and The Organic Centre, and is also on the board of ESB. Sean has experience and interest quality management; transformational change and systems thinking. He joins existing directors Mark Garavan (re-elected at AGM), John Fitzgibbon, John

Membership

Feasta is a members-based organisation and the focus of the main staff person, Morag Friel, is to provide office admin and support to members in pursuing their interests and work within Feasta's remit. As such her goal is to facilitate and communicate activities, projects and events with, and on behalf of, members.

She gives any necessary assistance in registering new members and seeing if they need any help or orientation once they are up and running. This might simply be encouraging them to post to the discussion boards or putting them in touch with an existing member or group with similar interests to their own.

In 2010 the main areas of focus were organising the Feasta office move to Cloughjordan, re-launching the organisation there and the establishment of a Dublin base in the Greenhouse. Other work was around helping with various events and the launch and subsequent sales of *Fleeing Vesuvius*.

In 2011 her focus will be on furthering the dissemination of *Fleeing Vesuvius* and encouraging maximum empowerment and participation of members.

Jopling, C oil n Nunan and Anne B. Ryan (re-elected at AGM).

Feasta Executive

Clare Scott and Mark Rutledge stepped down from the Executive and Graham Barnes came on board. Executive Members at the end of 2010 are Graham Barnes, Phoebe Bright, Corinna Byrne, Bruce Darrell, Richard Douthwaite, Gillian Fallon, Morag Friel, David Korowicz and Emer O'Siochru.

Feasta benefits hugely from the voluntary work done by Executive and Trustees and we would like to take the opportunity to thank them for their unstinting efforts and to wish well our colleagues who have moved on to other pursuits.

