 feasta

Annual Report

2012

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 dheanfaimid feasta gan adhmaid?
Ta deireadh ne gcoillte ar iar
What will we do in the future without wood?
The end of the forests has come

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The year 2012

Introduction by John Jopling

This was the year in which members of Feasta learned to live without the dynamic leadership of Feasta founder Richard Douthwaite who had died the previous November. It will be remembered as the year in which, with Richard no longer leading, we realised the value of having an organisation such as Feasta to hold the values we share and to co-ordinate and support the work of volunteers working on a range of sustainability issues.

In a world in which knowledge is increasingly specialised, Feasta provides a home for specialists without becoming a specialist organisation. Feasta brings together specialists in a range of issues relevant to sustainability – money systems, climate change, risk-resilience, smart taxes, food security, global governance; people practising as academics,

professionals or writers; people trained as economists, scientists or journalists. It's a place where joined-up thinking can be developed and shared with a wider public through publications, events, interviews and our website. What holds it all together, as our strap-line asserts, is systems thinking.

This diversity enabled Feasta to speak with a confidence that was unusual in a year in which mainstream systems were seen as increasingly dubious. As you will see as you read this catalogue of Feasta activities in 2012 Feasta is part of an emerging movement for coherent reform – monetary reform, tax reform and the regulation required to protect the natural systems on which life on earth depends.



Climate Group

The major event of the first half of 2012 was the publication of the Climate Group's book *Sharing for Survival: Restoring the Climate, the Commons and Society*. A launch was held in Machynlleth, Wales, in April as part of the Climate Group weekend, and at Cloughjordan in May. A presentation and book-signing was also organised for the Hay Literary Festival. You can read more about the book on page 7.

The Climate Group weekend included presentations and discussion on a wide range of topics including policy roadblocks, the biological productivity of land-based ecosystems, the challenge of communicating with non-environmentalists, and the dilemmas inherent to the lifestyle of the poor with a big carbon footprint.

Another major focus for the climate group in 2012 was the development of the idea that legal action could be a viable way to address climate change. Applying the precautionary principle that governments agreed to apply to the

risk of climate change twenty years ago, there is now an urgent need to reduce global emissions of CO2 from burning fossil fuels if runaway climate change is to be avoided. But these emissions are still rising and the governmental system has failed to bring about the necessary reductions. Might there be another way of bringing them about? Feasta developed the idea of reducing the flow of fuel into the global economy by an upstream cap, a global Cap and Share scheme. But that's a long way off from being adopted. In the meantime, might courts of law be willing to step in?

We are now exploring the possibility of a group of coastal communities taking legal action against a group of fossil fuel producers. The only precedents for such a claim are in the USA where the courts have decided that this is a matter for government, not the court. Courts in other countries, India for example, might well take a different view. This is what we are now exploring, encouraged by several leading lawyers in this field. It seems possible that it might be one

way of putting pressure on the fossil fuel industry. We have contact with organisations doing similar work in the Netherlands, India and the USA.

The Climate Group has also been thinking more deeply about how climate, and Cap and Share, is a commons issue – and seeking to integrate climate issues, and the Cap and Share idea, into the discussions of the emerging international commons movement. This follows on from Justin Kenrick's chapter in *Sharing for Survival* and involves seeing the defence of land commons in Africa and elsewhere as the best ways of preventing emissions from land use change and de-forestation. At the same time it has also involved participation in international discussions about the theory of the commons –for example in Pontoise in France in December organised by the Commons Strategy Group in conjunction with the Heinrich Boell Foundation (see page 11) and the Charles Leopold Mayer Foundation in France.



Launch of Sharing for Survival, Cloughjordan, May 2012

Smart Taxes

2012 saw the publication of the Smart Taxes Network's book *The Fair Tax*, described in more detail on page 7, which is the fruit of several years of collaborative research carried out by the Network and its partners. This marked the end of the Network's Feasta "funded project" component but the website at smarttaxes.org continues to function as a clearinghouse for useful information on tax and monetary reform.

In the autumn of 2012 much activity

was devoted to attempting to get a Site Value Tax into the new property tax legislation in Ireland, including the organisation of a petition. The bid was unsuccessful but the Network continues undaunted in its promotion of a Site Value Tax as being the fairest, most environmentally sound and most sustainable type of property tax. Smart Taxes organised a lively and well-attended debate on SVT which was held at Trinity College on September 24th with John Bowman from RTE as chair. The

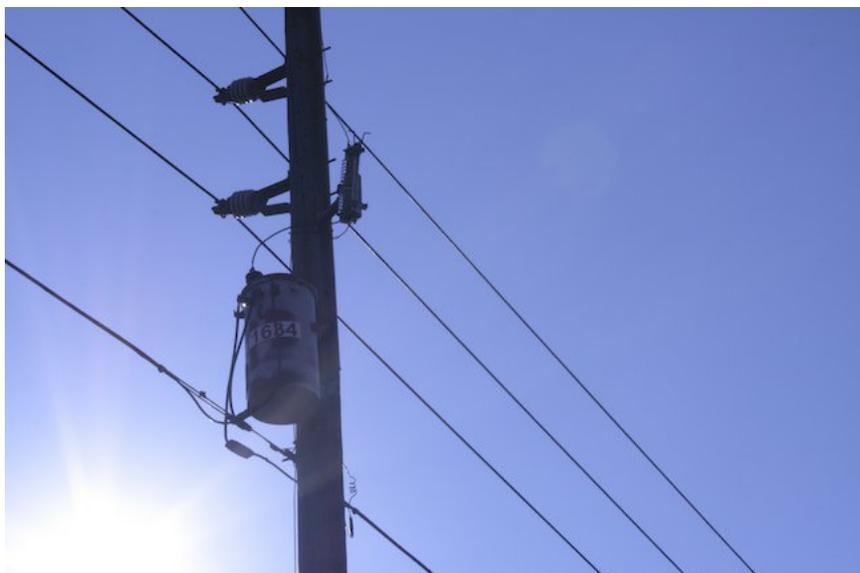
Network subsequently gave an audio-visual presentation for members of the Dáil, held on October 9th, in addition to a debate in Castleknock on the 27th. TDs from all parties attended the former and there was a lively discussion. Many politicians, not to speak of ordinary citizens, are clearly still unaware of the existence of viable alternative fiscal policies and so the dissemination of these ideas remains a strong priority.

Risk-Resilience

How does the complexity (interdependence, speed of processes, concentration) and de-localisation of the globalised economy affect our vulnerability to systemic shocks and chronic stresses? How does that complexity act as a constraint to changing mal-adaptive systems? What are the dynamics of systemic collapse and what are the implications for the management of crises and forced transitions? How do we deal with high levels of uncertainty? These are among the questions asked by Risk-Resilience.

Amongst the talks and publications by the network, David Korowicz's *Trade-Off: Financial System Supply-Chain Cross-Contagion, a study in global systemic collapse* has been most widely received this year, garnering a lot of interest globally from individuals and organisations concerned that we are heading for major depression, probably with very severe shocks. The paper explores the implications of a major financial crisis for the supply-chains that feed us, keep production running and maintain our critical infrastructure. It uses a scenario involving the collapse of the Eurozone

to show that increasing socio-economic complexity could rapidly spread irretrievable supply-chain failure across the world. The big question being looked at by the network is how to protect our welfare given the existing and the coming constraints (e.g. food security, energy and governance). If austerity as a lived experience is inevitable how best do we adapt?



Food Security

The Food Security group worked on a number of related projects in the course of 2012, with help from intern Pedro Campos:

i. To refine the "Good Food Index", an alternative measure that aims to assess "food quality" while taking into account environmental/human costs and nutritional value. The goal, thus, is to deliver an effective qualitative measure that accounts for the quality of the food in relation to the environmental efficiency under which it is produced.

ii. To develop and work on a Food Plan, including emergency planning within the context of peak oil and possible economic collapse in the near term. The Cloughjordan community farm associated with the eco-village in Cloughjordan is an interesting test case because members are very aware of sustainability and constraints issues. Even within this group, however, people have failed to adapt to, for example, an eat-local-only policy or to what is easy to produce (seasonality). This highlights problems with creating a local food system, planning foods for

local communities and other issues, especially given declining resources such as money and skills. Bruce Darrell will be publishing the findings on this.

iii. To support ongoing research for increasing biological productivity. Following a Nutritional Resilience concept, the goal is to evaluate different strategies for increasing biological productivity and resilience of terrestrial ecosystems, as a way of mitigating climate change. These strategies include biochar, re-mineralisation and holistic management of grasslands.



Chard growing at the ecovillage in Cloughjordan as part of the Food Security project

Global Community

This new Feasta Group is focusing on community governance, at all scales from local to global. Richard Douthwaite's book *Short Circuit*, which led to Feasta being founded, was about community economics, the need for it and how to do it. The basis of Douthwaite's argument was that we are social animals. This is also the basis of the new group – hence the word "Community" in the title of the group. We are specially concerned that where-

as humanity has come up against a number of global limits, several of which we have already exceeded, and our current governmental systems are plainly incapable of an adequate response, very little has been written and there is very little discussion of the kind of political/governance systems that would be capable of enabling an appropriate response. We would like to identify and study what has been written, not so much about what could or

should be done – there are libraries full of that information – but about the politics of enabling change, perhaps by means of making contact with key writers and expanding the discussion. What we are proposing also shares a common methodology with other Feasta work, namely a systems-thinking approach. And, of course, an appreciation of the need to live within the limits of natural systems.

Liquidity Network

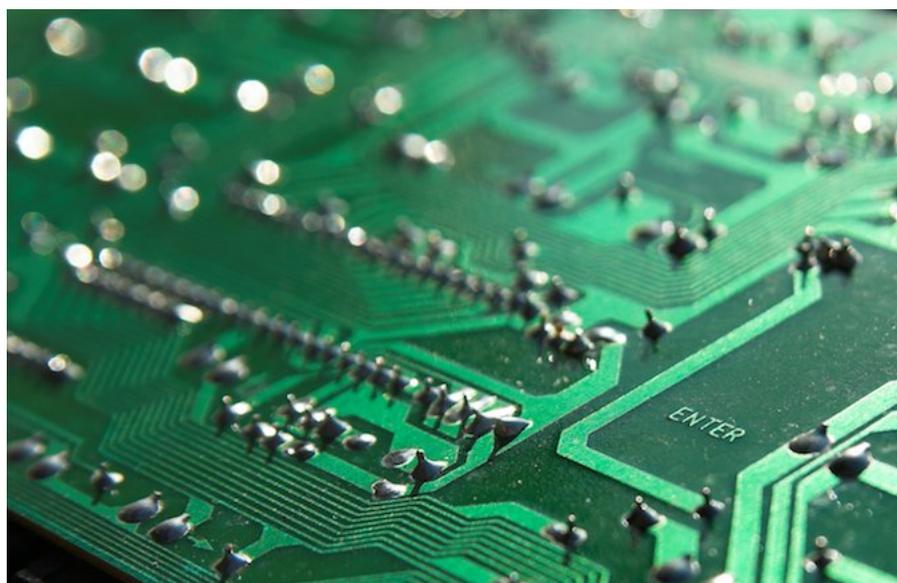
The thinking behind the Liquidity Network (LQN) approach, as originally articulated by the late Richard Douthwaite, is very much alive but manifesting itself in some unexpected ways. For six months through the summer Ciaran Mulloy and Graham Barnes worked with a Dublin-based restaurant chain to explore the potential for a commercially led LQN. The idea was that a tranche of currency was issued into circulation underwritten by the chain's suppliers, circulating in the local economies around the restaurants and being spent and re-spent in those locations to create more business for everyone – a sort of perpetual voucher currency. The models looked encouraging – showing a 'local GDP' multiplier of 4-5, and a good deal of progress was made with the model, which will be available for future projects. Commercial constraints unrelated to the project have sidelined it at present, but it appears that commercially led currencies and community currencies seem to be converging on the same space, and may be surprisingly compatible, and a new

cohort of unlikely social entrepreneurs is emerging.

The LQN group has also made a point of supporting, as far as resources allow, work on wider monetary reform. Two main schools of thought seem to be developing: those that want government to reclaim the right to issue money (debt-free) from the banks (aka The New Chicago Plan) and those seeking repair of the system via monetary diversity. In the first camp Positive Money and NEF in the UK and its smaller Irish sibling Sensible Money are doing excellent work educating the public, and some co-operation with these groups is emerging. Many of the enlightening discussions between the 95 activists in the Feasta Currency Group at <http://www.facebook.com/groups/design-currencies/> are around the relative merits of Bitcoin, mutual credit and other decentralised P2P approaches. But the general assumption is that multiple currencies will develop in parallel to provide an antidote to our existing dysfunctional monetary monoculture.

Some of these, we are sure, will take on board Douthwaite's implied assertion that 'not all transactions are equal', and that since currencies are never neutral (as the orthodox economists would have us believe), we might perhaps dare to prioritise some transactions over others, especially those with the greatest environmental and social benefit.

Current work is progressing on two fronts: the development of innovative capital financing options for renewable energy projects with the goal of avoiding the burden of compound interest and redirecting the 45% saved into more productive first use; and the visualisation of data to add impactful insight to the flow of money in a specific sub-economy. The extent to which local economies in particular have been 'strip-mined' of their one-time diverse functionality is still underestimated, and no meaningful economic development can take place without a clear understanding of the challenge.



Networking

A second new Feasta group is concentrating on networking. Over the years Feasta has accumulated a huge pool of knowledge on the economics of sustainability especially in relation to the impacts and challenges from a world based on (material) growth and consumption. Feasta has a responsibility to society to exchange this knowledge with others and to collaboratively develop possible alternatives to the current economic and societal model.

In reaching out to other organisations and networks it is inevitable that we have different views on our approaches and choices for a sustainable world and we may therefore come up with a "patchwork quilt of approaches" as Brian Davey would call it. But our objective is ultimately to communicate those to the wider public and engage with it. Our focus thus shifted to extending our engagement to large and possible global multipliers such as churches, trade unions, educational and scientific organisations, agricultural and marine interests and above all other "Green groups and interests".

Several initiatives have arisen from this approach. For example, an engagement initiated by Seán Conlan with the European Quality and Healthcare Communities led to a seminar in Cloughjordan in August on Transforming

Society (see page 11).

The main thrust of the networking activity, however, has been in exploring links with German-based organisations and institutions with similar interests to Feasta, and in seeking out topics, publications and events which might be of mutual interest to us. This has been largely carried out by Willi Kiefel with the support of some other Feasta members. Although it is very much work in progress, many rich contacts have already been made and a significant body of literature and publications has been collected by Willi, particularly in the area of alternative models of democracy and new thinking on social justice. What is striking from this work is that there is already very strong collaboration and networking among organisations in Germany. For example, Willi attended conferences and workshops in Wittenberg and Berlin as part of "The Great Transformation", organised jointly by the German Congress of Trade Unions (DGB), the Council of (Lutheran) Churches in Germany (EKD) and the umbrella organisation for the Green agenda in Germany (DNR). A rich set of other organisations exists often with direct or indirect presence globally. Specifically regarding Alternative Democratic Governance models we established contacts with Heinrich Boell Stiftung "Weiterdenken" in

Dresden, Hochschule fuer Gesellschaftspolitik Muenchen and Institute for Advanced Studies for Sustainability in Munich and the Catholic University of Leuven regarding their Conference "Democracy and the Market".

The Future...

The Networking Activity will continue to explore these contacts with a view to forming and perhaps formalising partnerships. It is also hoped to highlight the existing relationships between individual members or activities in Feasta with organisations both inside and outside Ireland.

Our focus will continue to be on linking social justice, alternative forms of democracy, and for want of a better word 'sustainability'.

Other possible routes for exploration include:

- The possibility of a similar Sustainability umbrella for Ireland.
- A series of joint lectures between ICTU, NUI perhaps with inputs from their German counterparts – perhaps delivered as webinars



Brian Davey giving a lecture on the place of the environment in economic theory in Cloughjordan, February 2012

Publications

In addition to David Korowicz's 78-page study *Trade-Off* (see page 3) and our two new books described below, Feasta members produced a number of other papers covering a wide range of subjects.

One of the final projects undertaken by the Carbon Cycles and Sinks Network was the publication of a **Feasibility study for the construction of a pilot/commercial-scale pyrolysis unit** by W. Kwapinski and J.J. Leahy of the University of Limerick, edited by Gillian Fallon in May 2012. The paper explored the potential of biochar production and concluded that in an Irish context, given the availability of feedstock resource, it may represent a viable economic proposition for rural economies provided that sufficient resources are devoted to research and development.

Graham Barnes prepared a paper en-

titled **The Lot of the Currency Designer** which was presented by Ciaran Mulloy at the ISTC Conference in Split, Croatia, in July 2012. The paper describes a number of legitimate objectives for a currency, getting liftoff and some selected design parameters. It then gives some views on cross-connecting currencies and concludes with a brief comparison with the 1930s, a period of great creativity in developing alternative currencies.

Nick Bardsley, a lecturer in climate change economics at Reading University, contributed a paper on **the problems with adopting biofuels as an alternative to fossil fuels** as well as the dilemmas inherent to lecturing in ecological economics.

David Knight, an honorary research associate at Oxford University, investigated **fracking** – the use of unconventional methods to extract

fossil fuels – and the twin problems of climate change and peak oil. The latter paper, entitled "**Climate Change and Peak Oil: two sides of the same coin?**", is very accessible as all the slides have been incorporated into a web page. It critiques the recent paper by Leonardo Maugeri which challenged the idea that peak oil is imminent or has already happened.

Feasta trustee Anne Ryan's paper entitled "**Cultivating sustainable and ethical prosperity with basic income**" examines the role of basic income in constructing a dynamic, diverse and democratic social economy. It was presented to the TASC (Think-tank for Action on Social Change) conference Crisis to Opportunity on Oct 19th, 2012 in Dublin. The paper covers several of Feasta's areas of focus and was presented as part of a session entitled "Equality fuelling recovery".

The Fair Tax

This book is a collection of essays on the advantages of implementing a Site Value Tax in Ireland. Its contributors include Colm McCarthy, an economics lecturer at UCD; Dr. Constantin Gurdgiev, the Head of Research for St. Columbanus AG, and Adjunct Professor of Finance at Trinity College, Dublin; Ronan Lyons, author of the Daft.ie Report and an economic consultant and commentator based at Oxford University; Judy Osborne, whose background is in conservation, planning and local government; and Dave Wetzal, former Vice-Chair of Transport for London who is now serving as President of the 'Labour Land Campaign'.

The book makes the case that a second massive transfer of wealth from the 99% to the 1% could happen again if the new

property tax in Ireland is not well designed. The authors clearly explain the real advantages of a Site Value Tax over a conventional property tax and convincingly demonstrate how easy it would be to assess and implement.

At the book's well-attended launch at Boswell's Hotel in October, Fr Sean Healy gave a speech in which he called for general tax reform. Seventeen TDs attended as well as advisors and a number of Seanad members. They came from a range of political perspectives, from Fianna Fail to Sinn Fein to Green Party. All feedback was very positive and while the politicians could not immediately promise to support a Site Value Tax, all left demanding to see the Property Expert Group Report and data on zoned land held by the Department



of the Environment in order to inform themselves on the subject.

Sharing for Survival

This collection of nine essays by members of Feasta's climate group was published in print version in April 2012. An online version is gradually being uploaded to www.sharingforsurvival.org.

As Brian Davey explains in its introduction, the book presents a variety of points of view which all nonetheless share the common assumption that the climate should be treated as a type of natural commons. In Davey's chapter **What do we do about climate change?** he explains why he believes we need to develop a package of economic energy and climate policies to address the different crises together – financial, energy, climate and cultivational.

In **The Climate and the Commons**, Justin Kenrick draws on existing experiences and challenges in the Kenyan highlands and Scottish islands and on the work of Elinor Olstrom to help identify ways of supporting and restoring the commons at the local, national and global levels.

Laurence Matthews' chapter **Cap and Share in Pictures** explains who would gain and who would lose in financial terms under C&S, compares C&S with downstream emissions caps and with hybrid systems, and discusses the different ways in which C&S could be implemented worldwide, via individual decisions by countries or via a global, UN-based institution.

In his chapter **Policy Packages**, Nick Bardsley echoes Brian Davey's view that any mechanism that we introduce in order to systematically cut emissions will have to be accompanied by a number of other measures or it will prove counter-productive. Topics covered in his paper include a proposed substitute for the much-criticised Clean Development

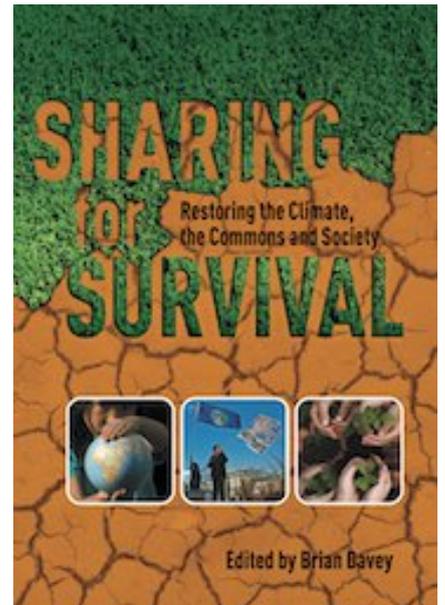
Mechanism, the current displacement of food production by biofuels, the relationship between food and energy use, the required shift away from debt-based money and the need for a land value tax.

John Jopling's chapter is on **operating effectively at the global level to address climate change**. Jopling wrote that "given the number and nature of the global problems facing humanity today, not least climate change, I believe that humankind's most crucial need now is to have the capacity to "operate effectively at the world level". My starting point is that we do not at present have this capacity. I want to suggest how we might acquire it."

In his chapter on **Cap and Share in India**, James Bruges discussed whether the funds from Cap and Share should be distributed equally to individuals or whether there are better ways of using them. He starts his chapter with some comments on climate and also covers related economic issues. Anandi Sharan also contributed a panel to the book on Cap and Share's implementation in India.

There are three more sections of *Sharing for Survival* in the pipeline to go online in 2013: a panel by James Bruges on the **potential of biochar**, Caroline Whyte's chapter on **practical and ethical challenges associated with distributing the share in Cap and Share worldwide**, and finally, Richard Douthwaite's chapter, written with help from David Knight, entitled "**Time for some optimism about climate change**".

Reviews of *Sharing for Survival* include that of James Robertson, the British economic thinker and monetary reform activist, who stated in his July 2012 newsletter that it is "a very welcome and understandable response to the dwind-



ling momentum of attempts to deal with climate change at the global level". Peter Barnes, the US social entrepreneur and advocate of the Sky Trust, considers it to be "a great book [...] packed not with cockeyed optimism, but with reasoned hope and proposals for action." Frank Barnaby, professor of Peace Studies at the University of Delft, believes the book to be "essential reading for all interested in effective action against climate change." In the Manchester Climate Monthly, Mark Burton wrote that the book contains "a wealth of useful information and ideas", while Alistair McIntosh believes that "its calls for land reform as one driver for such community empowerment are especially refreshing."

Website

The website has continued to function as a central platform for Feasta's ideas, with original articles, papers and commentary being uploaded at least once a week, in addition to links to other useful online resources. In the course of 2012 the website's search engine was expanded, making it possible not only to search the recent material posted on our blog but also the texts of all the Feasta books, going all the way back to the first Feasta Review from 2000, along with all our pdf documents and the content of Feasta's project sites.

Much of the new material on the site is described elsewhere in this report; most of the articles, presentations and other publications mentioned are available for free download. Additionally, the site contains reports from several international conferences which were attended by Feasta members, along with commentaries and book reviews:

- Graham Barnes went to the Transition Networks conference in London in May which prompted him to contribute some thoughts on the fundamental objectives of a local exchange currency – increasing both the proportion of trade that is locally based, and overall liquidity – and on how these might best be achieved. He also contributed articles on the challenge of re-localisation and on Sustainable Currency and the Green Economy. In the latter article he argued that, while "green technology" is an important response to the convergent crises that



Ireland and other nations face, it is important not to overlook two other important macroeconomic issues: our current dependence on debt-based money, and the need to rebuild and strengthen local economies.

- Brian Davey attended the McPlanet conference in Berlin, also in May, and provided a report that includes discussion of the role that needs to be played by the commons in the future economy, along with a critique of the rather overly optimistic idea that the digital commons (as opposed to natural commons) will save the day without triggering any unwanted side-effects.
- David Korowicz described how consensus can mask reality, making it hard to overcome political inertia, in a piece entitled "Ignorance by consensus".
- Organic farmer and Feasta member Patrick Noble makes the case in his new book *A Potent Nostalgia* that those of us who do real, tangible work – "trade's people" – hold the key to the future. The foreword from

his book is available on the Feasta site and further excerpts will be added in 2013.

- Caroline Whyte contributed articles on the problems with rating agencies and on the potential for action on climate change to have positive effects for society as a whole – a theme currently being developed by Naomi Klein that is also explored in our book *Sharing for Survival*.
- Elizabeth Cullen's paper on the nitrogen cycle and health describes the public health implications of our disruption of the nitrogen cycle.
- Brian Kallor's paper on winter vitamins provides practical advice for reacquainting ourselves with basic methods for providing nutrition as we adapt to a world without easy access to fossil fuels.
- Book reviews by Aidan McKeown, Graham Barnes, Anne Ryan, Mark Garavan and John Jopling covered themes ranging from the need for economic localisation to the development of a pedagogy of sustainability.

Feasta in the Media

In addition to the reviews of *Sharing for Survival* mentioned on page 8, mentions of Feasta in the media in 2012 include Sylvia Thompson's article "Preparing for apocalypse – it's a ton of fun" in the Irish Times on January 7. The Ir-

ish Times also referred to Feasta's collaboration with other environmental NGOs in opposition to fracking and to the Harvest 2020 plans for Irish agriculture. As in 2011, Feasta, Smart Taxes and *Fleeing Vesuvius* were mentioned on

numerous blogs, including the Huffington Post, Stuart Bramhall's blog and the "Transition What?" website.

Feasta-led Events

As mentioned above, the Feasta Climate Group held its annual gathering in April with a weekend of activities that included the launch of Sharing for Survival at the Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynlleth, Wales.

The Feasta Members' weekend was held from Sept 28-30th at Cloughjordan and included much stimulating discussion. The weekend was launched with a lecture by Nicole Foss of the Automatic Earth blog on Building Resilience in an Era of Financial Crisis. It was a rare opportunity for members to network over a couple of days eating local food and to get to know about the work they do outside their involvement with Feasta.

The AGM and Members' Gathering was

held on November 17th. Led by Anne Ryan the gathering took the opportunity to mark the first anniversary of the death of our colleague Richard Douthwaite and to remember his extraordinary energy and leadership. After the necessary formal AGM business the meeting approved the adoption of Feasta's Statement of Ethos and Values. Mark Garavan facilitated a session reporting back on members' existing projects and presenting two new proposed initiatives (Global Community and Ideas Sharing (later renamed to Networking)). The gathering ended with an in-depth discussion on fundraising, focusing both on the need for funds, given our dwindling reserves, and on



using the relevance and reputation of Feasta to attract funding. Members agreed to join the Fundraising Group or to contribute specific assistance to it.

Submissions

- 1. Submission on sustainable development in Ireland, March 2012**. Makes a wide-ranging list of recommendations, including the development of better statistics and analysis for sustainable development and giving County/City Development Boards a Sustainable Development remit.
- 2. Submission to the Irish government's consultation on climate change policy, May 2012**. This paper provides an overview of Cap and Share and the Carbon Maintenance Fee, a programme developed as an alternative to the controversial Clean Development Mechanism by members of the Carbon Cycles and Sinks Network, including the late Richard Douthwaite. The submission also describes the increasing emphasis placed on legal action as a catalyst for improving climate protection and, thus, the need for a climate law.
- 3. Submission to the EPA on their draft Strategic Plan, November 2012**. We suggest altering some of the draft's terminology to make it clearer that prosperity, rather than growth, is a central goal. We also suggest the adoption of clearly quantifiable environmental parameters, such as those outlined by the Stockholm Resilience Group. Finally, we urge the EPA to make use of data from a wider variety of sources.
- 4. The Smart Taxes Network made a submission to the special Expert Group** which has been set up to deliver a Property Tax for Ireland in which it made a case for adopting a Site Value Tax.
- 5. June 7th submission on Food Harvest 2020** (the Irish government's policy guidelines for agriculture). We query the guidelines' assumptions that the expansion of greenhouse-gas intensive practices will not interfere with Ireland's climate emissions reduction goals and will contribute to food security in importing countries. We suggest instead that policy focus in protecting terrestrial carbon cycles and sinks and on land use conversion to biofuel-biomass production.

Collaboration

Feasta has always recognised that it must be part of international networks of fellow thinkers about environmental and economic problems. Feasta's conferences typically invite thinkers from far afield to feed their ideas into its deliberations, as well as to

present at the Feasta Annual Lecture.

In order to further pursue this goal Feasta formed a new primary activity group for networking in 2012 (see page 6). The central strategy of the group is to develop a relationship with other

groups/organisations working in the Feasta vein to facilitate activism. The group has an emphasis on social justice and relationships with active organisations outside Feasta, which then link with other organisations to diffuse and recover information and networks.



Summercamp participants

Summer Camp Cloughjordan

As mentioned on page 6, in August 2012 a very special gathering took place in Cloughjordan. An international group travelled from all over the world to take part in it. In total 40 participants – including a good sprinkling of Feasta members and locals from the village – participated in this particular Summercamp.

The group was made up of those involved in societal and organisational change and interested in overcoming personal, cultural and national bound-

aries and facilitating collaboration.

The main themes for the 2013 Summercamp were the turbulence of the world we live in, local responses to Global problems and emerging futures.

Summercamps of this type began in July 2000, when the European Organization for Quality (EOQ) gathered 60 Change Leaders from 13 countries in Versailles. Each year since then a number of gatherings have taken place in various parts of Europe and the US.

Several Feasta members engaged deeply with the group and the other participants were particularly struck by the application of VSM (Stafford Beer's Viability Systems Model) in both the eco-village and in Feasta. John Jopling outlined his thoughts on global action to limit climate change and Bruce Darrell facilitated a tour of the eco-village and his Food Security project.

Heinrich Boell Foundation

In the last year Feasta has been particularly interested in developing its connections with organisations and networks such as those of the Heinrich Boell Foundation in Germany. The Heinrich Boell Foundation has been involved with worldwide networks of academics and activists who are considering degrowth perspectives and also international thinking about reviving and protecting 'commons' as appropriate forms of community organisation to manage local environments.

Brian Davey has participated in the initiatives of the 'Commons Strategy Group', including contributing to a collection of articles published in English and German, called *The Wealth of the Commons. A World Beyond Market and State*. He has also participated in a December 2012 seminar, at Pontoise near Paris, on the Economics of the Commons, that was preparatory to a global conference on the Commons to be held in Berlin May 22nd-24th 2013.

There have been discussions in Feasta

about how ideas like these can feed into discussions in Ireland about community engagement on environmental issues. There is a scope and need to promote awareness of community participative approaches to environmental management and learning from developments like community land reform in Scotland. Feasta has also become aware that important work is being pioneered in Ireland to support commoners in taking steps against overgrazing in upland pastures in Ireland.

Basic Income Ireland

This increasingly active group includes several of our members and is keeping in close contact with Feasta. It is part of a large network of international groups working towards establishing a basic income: an unconditional, universal payment distributed from the state to every legal resident. Basic income is always tax-free, and is not affected if a person has earned income also. It replaces all current social welfare payments, including children's allowance and the state pension. Most importantly, it extends

payment to those who currently receive no payments from the state.

During 2012, the Irish network adopted the name Basic Income Ireland and did all the foundational work for launching a website, now online at www.basicincomeireland.com. The website was launched at a public event in Maynooth in March 2013. The website shows calculations of how basic income can be paid for out of current revenues in Ireland. It also contains separate pages

showing how basic income could help young people, self-employed people, small businesses and cooperatives, people involved in caring work, those involved in artistic and creative work, and the unemployed.

The network is currently developing a page on basic income and farming, and continues to develop the FAQ page of the website, in response to correspondence from visitors to the site.



Environmental Pillar and IEN

Feasta is a member of the Environmental Pillar, a mechanism for national environmental NGOs to engage with the Irish government formally through various consultation processes and to work together on policy issues. Feasta has brought its perspective on economic issues into a network where the strongest expertise is probably on biodiversity issues. This has led to a fruitful exchange of views and a high profile by the Pillar on taxation issues in particular. David Healy is the current Feasta representative for the Pillar, replacing Emer O'Siochru who stepped down from that role in January 2012.

The Pillar has taken a strong stance in favour of Site Value Land taxation. Given the difficulties experienced in communicating the merits of Site Value Tax and the fact that most pillar organisa-

tions do not focus on tax, this is a welcome achievement. To some degree, the Pillar, representing the wide consensus of the environmental sector, has complemented the work of the Smart Taxes Network which has generated almost all of the informed public debate on land/property taxation.

Feasta's ideas and perspectives also inform the Pillar's work on climate change – for example, in developing an understanding of the atmosphere as a global commons. The budget submissions that the Pillar makes, including Site Value Tax and environmental tax reform in general and the Green Jobs Guarantee, also reflect Feasta thinking.

The Irish Environmental Network is traditionally narrower in focus, being aimed at helping members access gov-

ernment and other funding sources. However, there has also been co-operation through IEN including a significant piece of work on the Green Economy. While in some respects the Green Economy report does not go as deeply into some of the sustainable economics issues as Feasta's usual analysis, nonetheless IEN's approach has been fundamentally informed by Feasta's thinking. It is striking that in contrast with the usual cautious reaction of various Government Departments, there was real interest in what IEN had to say about the green economy; it seems that the collective failure to recognise the crisis before and even as it happened has led to a greater eagerness to learn from outside perspectives.

Events with Feasta speakers

Social worker and therapist Dr. John Sharry gave a presentation entitled “Towards resilience: how are mental health professionals to respond to the climate crisis and the threat of ecosystemic collapse” at a symposium at the second annual Irish Council for Psychotherapy conference in January. David Korowicz and Bruce Darrell both spoke at Cloughjordan Community Farm’s national event on Community Supported Agriculture, “Growing Together”, in February. Phoebe Bright gave presentations for Transition Tralee, also in February, at the Cork Lifelong Learning Festival in March, and at a Green Drinks gathering in Cork in which she described innovative new local currency developments.

Bruce Darrell and Ciaran Mulloy gave workshops at a permaculture design

certificate course organised by Cultivate at Cloughjordan in July. Feasta members Jonathan Dawson and Peadar Kirby were among the course teachers at the Schumacher Ireland Summer School held at Holywood, County Down, on the theme **Exploring the transition to a sustainable society on the island of Ireland**, in June. Dawson was also one of the teachers at a Schumacher College course, “**Banking on Ourselves**”, held in London in November.

In August Brian Davey gave a presentation to the Cafe Economique in Nottingham on **economics and moral philosophy**, illustrated with 60 slides.

An audio recording is available on the Feasta site. He also contributed a **general introduction to ecological economics** which forms part of an

open-access engineering course at Nottingham University.

David Korowicz gave a talk on the “**Twilight of the Age of Growth**” for a project by artists Walker & Bromwich at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Arts, Newcastle, UK, in December 2012. Finally, also in December, the Cork Environmental Forum awarded a lifetime achievement award posthumously to Richard Douthwaite. The award was collected by Phoebe Bright on behalf of his widow Mary, who was unable to travel from Westport that day. It was only the second lifetime achievement award that the CEF had awarded and was intended to honour the groundbreaking contribution which Richard made to the field of sustainable economics during his lifetime.



Phoebe Bright with Conor McManus and Bernie Connolly of the Cork Environmental Forum at its awards ceremony in December 2012 (photo courtesy of CEF)

Management

The major change in Feasta's management in 2012 was the transition to a management framework based on Stafford Beer's Viable Systems Model. This model is intended to provide a large degree of autonomy for each distinct activity that an organisation engages in while simultaneously ensuring the accountability of those involved to the organisation.

Feasta's Executive committee has now been replaced by five self-governing groups with the remit of developing specific primary activities: Projects and Brand Management; Feasta Fundraising; Publications and Website; Organising Events; and Networking. All members of these groups are expected to follow Feasta's Statement of Ethos and Values and the groups are to report back to the overall coordinators at regular intervals. The Trustees' powers and responsibilities of the Trustees under company and charity law remain unchanged.

At present there are six Feasta Trustees (directors): Anne Ryan, C  il  n N  nan, John Jopling, Mark Garavan, Sean Conlan and Paul Leech who was co-opted after the AGM. It is hoped to co-opt another member during the course of 2013. The Trustees will be holding a Skype meeting once a month and also meet face-to-face twice a year.

At the AGM in November John Jopling stood down as Chairperson of Feasta. His influence and impact on Feasta since its foundation have been of huge significance. However, his great experience and wisdom will continue to be available to us as he continues on as a Trustee and he is co-ordinating the new proposed group on Global Community.

The Trustees have agreed to rotate the role of Chairperson at least every two years. The new Chairperson is Mark Garavan. Mark lectures in GMIT, Castlebar, and is the author of *Compassionate Activism: An Exploration of Integral*

Social Care.

Staff and interns

Morag Friel continued in her role as office administrator and membership coordinator, while Caroline Whyte continued to manage the Feasta website.

Pedro Campos spent July to December of 2012 interning with Feasta's Food Security project in Cloughjordan. Originally from Portugal, Campos is a Master's student in Human Ecology, at Lund University, Sweden. He also has a background in economics.

Brian Davey worked with intern Lisa St  ve (who is from Germany but was based in Dublin) on a short briefing on the commons and what is going on in this area in Germany, and what Feasta and other organisations can learn from this.

