



Minutes (Amended Version) of the Meeting between The Soil Association, The Woodland League and Derrybrien Residents

Date: 11.30am, 5th June 2004
Venue: Egan's Pub, Derrybrien
Coordinators: The Woodland League
Distributes: 30th June 2004

Present:

Vanessa Linforth (vlinforth@soilassociation.org)	Soil Association
Kevin Jones (kjones@soilassociation.org)	Soil Association
Adriene Booth (adrieneq@oceanfree.net)	Soil Association
Andrew St. Ledger (karenolan@eircom.net)	Woodland League
Teddy Cook	Woodland League
Brendan Kelly (kellybrendan@eircom.net)	Woodland League
Martin Collins	Derrybrien Resident
Bernie Egan	Derrybrien Resident
Berna Morgan	Derrybrien Resident
Frances Broderick	Derrybrien Resident
Michael Gallagher	Derrybrien Resident
Martin Broderick	Derrybrien Resident
Josie Broderick	Derrybrien Resident
Peter Conroy	Monivea Demesne Preservation Soc.
Ciarán Hughes (ciaran_hughes@yahoo.co.uk)	People Against Pesticides
James O'Mahony	Observer
Tim Crowe	Observer
Alex Eberhardinger	Observer

Chairman: Brendan Kelly

Interim Secretary: Ciarán Hughes

Chairman: (Introduction from Chairman) On behalf of the Woodland League (WL), thanked the representatives of the Soil Association (SA) for travelling to the meeting. Thanked the Derrybrien Residents for hosting the meeting. Thanked the representatives from the Monivea Demesne Preservation Society (MDPS) and People Against Pesticides (PaP) for attending. Welcomed the observers to the meeting. Expressed regrets that a representative from Irish Forestry Certification Initiative (IFCI), Irish Peatland Conservation Council (IPCC) or Voice of Irish Concern for the Environment (VOICE) could not be present.

Andrew St. Ledger: Also welcomed the Soil Association, and thanked them for attending. Expressed pleasure at the range and number of people attending.

Suggested that each group should get a 20 minute uninterrupted chance to have their say [generally agreed by all]. Then the representatives from SA would respond. Suggested Martin Collins should start.

Martin Collins: Welcomed all to Derrybrien. Stressed the importance of forestry in the area. Gave a brief description of their submission.

Stated that there is a high level of forestry in the area, which has its own problems.

Referred to the sale of Coillte land for development as a big problem. 850 acres were sold for wind-farm development. Expressed disgust that local people were never properly consulted prior to this development.

Referred to the landslide in which 450,000 m³ of bog slid. This was directly due to the construction. Coillte's method of planting accelerated the slide.

Coillte were aware of the potential for a landslide. Referred to a minor landslide previous to the large one.

Stated that Coillte received a felling license to clearfell 650 acres of that site. No impact assessment was carried out prior to this. Impact assessment necessary for sites greater than 60 hectares.

Explained that local people were never informed about the chemicals (pesticides/herbicides) that Coillte were using on the forestry. Stated that there was a possibility of water pollution.

Expressed his disgust at the way local people were treated at the consultation meetings. Felt that these meetings were a waste of time and that local people's opinions and issues were ignored.

Said that fences around Coillte forestry were often dilapidated. Animals often got into the forests. Coillte are tardy in fixing fences. Clearfelling (using machinery) often leads to fences being destroyed. They are often not replaced.

Explained that the mass plantation that occurs in the Derrybrien area leads to the destruction of local heritage, local culture and, quite often, even placenames are lost.

Described the danger of forest fires in the area. There is personal danger for people in the area, with fires impossible to control. Referred to the forest fires that came right up to the road and at points crossed the roads. The road had to be closed for a period due to this. Suggested that more broadleaf

trees would help this situation. Referred also to the danger of smoke from the fires.

Said that the bridges and roads of the area could not take the load of the trucks and machinery used in Coillte's forests.

Explained that Coillte were once a good employer in the area, but are no longer. Local people once had a reasonable relationship with the foresters, but no longer.

Wondered where Derrybrien would go as a community. Derrybrien is an oasis in a sea of forestry. Wondered if they will survive.

Chairman: Explained to SA representatives that the selling of land by Coillte in a similar manner to that of Derrybrien has happened in numerous places. Listed several placenames. A major CAR was raised in 2001 in reference to this. Asked the representatives from the SA to respond (on Coillte selling land in this manner).

Kevin Jones: Explained that the SA has visited some of these sites, and that they have had detailed discussions with the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) in Bonn. Explained that it is the job of the SA to examine the standard and its effects in the field, and also to follow FSC principles. Referred to Principle 6.10.

Chairman: Read out Principle 6.10.

Kevin Jones: Stated that the disposal of land is allowed under the IFCI standard/SA Generic Standard. Also stated that Coillte may not be meeting all the requirements necessary.

Chairman: Questioned whether the SA has to apply by the Rio Agreement.

Kevin Jones: Responded that the SA follows FSC Principles, and applies the SA standard. [Chairman's question remained unanswered].

Chairman: Stated that the standard that Coillte have been certified to has not been consulted with any environmental NGOs.

Kevin Jones: Explained that the SA has not changed their generic standard. It is endorsed by FSC. The SA has imported parts of IFCI and UK standards into this. The SA has attempted to opt for the highest level of compliance.

Andrew St. Ledger: Referred to FSC rule whereby the standard should abide by all local and international laws. Felt that this has not been done.

Explained that in Ireland native planting is at only about 8-9%, whereas the EU recommends 20% minimum. Felt that Coillte were not doing anything to rectify this, and that this situation was detrimental to local communities

Said that UK forestry was different to Irish forestry, and as such, the UK standard is not relevant in Ireland.

Kevin Jones: Stated that the UK standard is applicable in Northern Ireland. The SA is trying to develop a standard for both the republic and the north of Ireland. Explained that the SA is trying to make the best of a difficult situation [agreement from other SA members].

Andrew St. Ledger: Referred to the Coillte Consultation Document.

- Kevin Jones:** Said that the SA has knowledge of the hotly debated topics. However, the SA needs a basis for any knowledge or numbers they receive.
- Chairman:** Questioned the SA on what percentage of a forestry management unit can be sold for development. Asked if Coillte could be certified if they breach this percentage. Referred to documentation regarding water quality, and other issues. Questioned the SA on environmental assessments prior to disposal of land.
- Kevin Jones:** Replied that between 1% and 5% can be sold [unsure of exact percentage]. If there were a breach of this, the SA would issue warnings, and only after repeated offences would they remove certification. Referred to principle 9. Stated that Coillte would need an environmental assessment before any disposal of land.
- Chairman:** Referred to further documentation. Asked why public consultation is not mentioned. Stated that there is no real consultation with Coillte, only bully tactics. [Agreed by Woodland League members, Derrybrien Residents and Peter Conroy]
- Kevin Jones:** Said that consultation issues have been raised with Coillte. [Referring to Derrybrien/Coillte Consultations] Asked what issues did Martin Collins raise at the consultation meetings with Coillte.
- Martin Collins:** Couldn't raise any issues, because Coillte never explained their plans for the area. Didn't know what the problems could be. The meetings with Coillte were a farce, because they never explained anything to the Derrybrien residents, and never listened to them. Referred to documentation (regarding the purchaser).
- Kevin Jones:** Asked if issues could be raised with local foresters.
- Martin Collins:** Explained that they could on a one-to-one basis, informally. No resolution came from any such meetings. Explained that local foresters were once respected in the community, but they are no longer.
- Kevin Jones:** The SA has insisted that Coillte set in place a dispute resolution procedure. Coillte have in place a number of policies to facilitate stakeholder problems, but it is evident that these have not been properly implemented.
- Chairman:** Under FSC rules, IFCI have to have a Dispute Resolution Procedure in proper working order. There is no-one on the IFCI Social Chamber to represent the people of Derrybrien.
- Andrew St. Ledger:** Read an excerpt from a book entitled "Economics of Irish Forestry".
- Martin Collins:** 160 acres is the threshold for EIA. The area clearfelled for the wind-farms was 650 acres. 300 acres will be replanted in Tipperary and Roscommon. One of the areas in Tipperary is a Coillte Christmas Tree farm.
- Teddy Cook:** Questioned if it was considered sustainable by the SA to clearfell one forestry, and plant another smaller forest elsewhere in the country.
- Kevin Jones:** Replied that the SA did not consider this to be sustainable. The SA wants to reassess the process in Ireland from the beginning.
- Chairman:** Expressed his worries at reassessing the process using the current standard. Explained that Dr. Declan Little is the only member on the Social Chamber of IFCI, which is against FSC rules. Dr. Declan Little has worked in the

past with Coillte. His actions have shown that he is biased towards Coillte's economic trends.

Expressed his worries that IFCI are agreeing a third standard without ever producing the first draft standard. Wondered how the SA could expect anyone to deal with these people, when they are so quick to lie.

Explained that there was a recent EU ruling that it is illegal to charge a fee for public information on developments. Felt that the IFCI membership fee fell into this category.

[Letter presented: from Caroline Murphy on behalf of IFCI demanding that all members pay the membership fee].

- Kevin Jones:** Said that the issues here need to be "on the table" with IFCI.
- Chairman:** Stated that he (as representative for People Against Pesticides) asked to be present when Principle 6.6 was agreed. He was refused access to this meeting, and others. Stated that violent language was used against him. Referred to Dr. Ann Behan's letter of resignation from the steering committee of IFCI. Considered this to be extremely unprofessional.
- Peter Conroy:** Stated that the indigenous people of Ireland do not recognise IFCI Ltd. as a valid certification authority.
- Andrew St. Ledger:** Asked if the SA could support the Woodland League to reengage IFCI Ltd. and their bogus documents, and to push for Jacenta French's document to be included in any standard. Explained that at the moment the two economic chambers dominate IFCI.
- Explained that at the moment, the SA is only representing about 1000 Irish people (i.e. the employees of Coillte Teoranta) when they certify Coillte.
- Explained the importance of the Woodland League's document. This document represents the majority of interested parties.
- Kevin Jones:** Explained that the SA can write to FSC centrally on these issues (regarding the Woodland League's document).
- Asked if the SA could obtain a list of the NGOs that support the Woodland League.
- Andrew St. Ledger:** [Gave Kevin Jones the list requested] Explained that this list (contained within the Woodland League's standard) was not up to date, due to the lack of funding available to the Woodland League.
- Chairman:** Asked if the Woodland League could get a list of NGOs that support IFCI. [Remained unanswered by the SA]
- Andrew St. Ledger:** Explained that there was no access to information (regarding forestry) for local peoples because information on forestry is exempt from the freedom of information acts. Expressed his disgust that Coillte are accepting the public's money, but not abiding by law.
- Chairman:** Explained that the SA has to abide by their Generic standard/IFCI Standard. Reads from the Generic standard (regarding local people and forestry/access to forestry (Principle 2.2)).
- Kevin Jones:** Said that this section was taken from IFCI's standard.

- Teddy Cook:** Felt that this was a ridiculous situation. Coillte and IFCI have complete disregard for local or indigenous people. Expressed his dissatisfaction that the SA took this section from the IFCI standard.
- Kevin Jones:** Explained that on a personal level, he doesn't always agree with all the standards. Professionally, however, he has to. In this case, the SA has incorporated elements out of several local standards. The SA cannot change the elements taken from the local standards. Only the local standards can be changed.
- Chairman:** Irish NGOs do not recognise IFCI as a valid certification authority. We cannot change the national standard, because we are not allowed attend meetings at which principles are discussed.
- Vanessa Linforth:** FSC recognises IFCI as a valid certification authority. FSC do not recognise the Woodland League.
- Teddy Cook:** FSC are not up to the needs of the country. They do not understand fully the state of Irish forestry, and fail to see the shocking differences between the likes of Dublin and Connemara. There is a fear of the forestry sector in this country. Local communities are afraid to engage them because of the "bully tactics" Coillte use.
- The IFCI standard is taken directly from the Woodmark standard, which is a form of plagiarism. The IFCI standard is taken from another culture that isn't relevant to this culture. The UK has 5% ancient forests, whereas the Republic of Ireland has barely any.
- Explained that he went to an IFCI meeting in Mallow. Only 17 people were in the audience, 6 of which were foresters. 17 people cannot represent the 1 million people in Munster. This was not a public consultation meeting as it was supposed to be.
- There is no history of liaison between local people and the forest service. The freedoms of information acts have excluded the forest sectors. Coillte are not subject to EPA, nor are local authorities. The forest service has been insulated and indemnified. But there is still 90% foreign exotic planting. There is no difference between Coillte and the forest service.
- Explained that he was against Dr. Gerhardt Gallagher being in the SGS, because he was a senior member in Coillte.
- Said that he confronted Tony Mannion at one stage. Tony Mannion said that IFCI supported the Bruntland view of forestry. This was crap, and the same crap was given out to people at a later meeting.
- The Heritage Council (the people that employ Teddy Cook to visit schools) want for there to be 50% native broadleaf planting. People in general associate the state forestry with chemists and pharmaceuticals.
- Dr. Declan Little, chairman of IFCI meetings, never revealed he was a Coillte employee at the meetings, and neither did Tony Mannion. IFCI is promoted and controlled by the Forest Service (Coillte). Coillte wrote the IFCI standard to suit themselves, and the SA have included it in the standard that Coillte are certified to. IFCI received IR£30,000 from Coillte.
- The Heritage Council may not now recognise IFCI.
- Chairman:** I was involved with IFCI (as a director). An agreed document was produced in 1999 (went to consultation in 2000). It was called the second draft

because forestry cannot be certified to a consultation document. The second draft is nothing but a consultation document. There was no first draft. Coillte wrote the IFCI standard, and Coillte are certified to this.

- Peter Conroy:** Felt that the current meeting was going no-where. Coillte have promised much but delivered nothing. Warned the SA against Coillte, stating that they are “tricksters”.
- There are indigenous people in this country. Considered himself to be one. Indigenous people are not recognised by Coillte, who state that there are none in this country. Indigenous people’s rights to use the woods have been removed by fencing/pesticides/etc.
- [Referring to the wood in Monivea] Coillte say they own the wood, but a Lady of the area gave the wood in trust to the people of Monivea in the past. Coillte are now trying to sell part of it for development, though they do not own the wood.
- Objections have been made regarding the Coillte developments in Monivea. Because of this, Coillte have divided the entire community. The SA should not be certifying Coillte.

- Andrew St. Ledger:** The Woodland League’s submission has never been answered. The Woodland League want to clarify submissions made to the SA, including land given in trust to people of an area being given/sold by Coillte. All information regarding land tenure should be in local public places. This is not the case.
- Expressed his grievances that gifts to local people are being taken by Coillte for development, and that a private company (i.e. Coillte) is being given precedence over local communities by the government.

- Chairman:** Used the example that Dr. Ruth McGrath (of IFCI Ltd.) stated that no submissions were ever received from the Derrybrien residents.

- Martin Collins:** Stated that he, representing the Derrybrien Community, sent a submission to IFCI Ltd.

- Kevin Jones:** The SA understands the emotions and frustrations of local people. Admitted that Coillte are very difficult people to deal with. Coillte are driven by profit. The SA has some control over Coillte when the SA certifies them. Without certification, the SA have no control over Coillte.

- Andrew St. Ledger:** The Woodland League asked for suspension of certification for Coillte. FSC makes Coillte more valuable. Coillte were not ready for privatisation five years ago. Since then they have forced FSC certification, because certain buyers (particularly in the UK) require their timber to have this certification.

Coillte should be given the certification when they deserve, and not before that.

- Peter Conroy:** Referred to a letter regarding grievances from local people about Coillte’s drive for money and the Monivea Wood.

- Kevin Jones:** The SA could remove Coillte certification, but Coillte would just get another company to certify them, and the situation would be exactly the same. It is up to the local people to influence the national standard. The SA cannot influence this. The SA incorporate parts from several draft standards. [Agreement from SA members]

- Chairman:** The SA has certified Coillte to a consultation document. Refers to the FSC principles on indigenous people's rights. The SA principles are not the same as the FSC principles on this.
- Explained to members of the SA present that they need to get a copy of the first draft standard, the consultation document and the second draft standard from IFCI.
- [Referring to book written by Hannah Scrase] The auditors (i.e. SA) should be involved in the setting of standards. Stated that forestry in Ireland can progress through the FSC process, but not through IFCI.
- It is the SA's job to certify Coillte to a standard. This standard is bogus, though.
- Vanessa Linforth:** IFCI are trying to include submissions into their next standard.
- Teddy Cook:** Questioned if the SA have any jurisdiction to quiz the IFCI on the submissions that were sent, but apparently never arrived at IFCI. [Remained unanswered]
- Kevin Jones:** The SA's rules are similar to those of a national standard. The SA has to follow a set of rules on how to adapt the SA's standard to the local rules. SGS were given corrective action by FSC because they did not follow these rules. The SA cannot let this happen.
- The SA has to operate within a set of constraints. If that doesn't happen, the SA is punished by FSC.
- However, it is the job of the local people to put pressure on the SA, on FSC and on the local standard authority (IFCI).
- Martin Broderick:** There were over 100,000 fish killed by the landslide (via pollution of a river and two streams). Coillte knew there was a chance that the landslide would occur (from previous smaller landslides).
- Asked why Coillte were then given the grants for this area, and would Coillte get the grants if they did not have certification. [The members from the SA were unable to answer this question].
- Martin Collins:** Coillte received the felling license for the land that was sold for the development of the wind-farms. Unsure as to whether the license transferred from Coillte to the developers of the wind-farms.
- The impact assessment was done on the development of the wind-farms, but not on the clearfelling of the trees. The assessment was done in 1998.
- Chairman:** Asked if the SA could find out more information from Coillte on the felling license/impact assessment.
- Kevin Jones:** Responded that the SA would ask for this information.
- Andrew St. Ledger:** Quoted from a document from the Department of Marine and Science; "The Irish language should be used in all documents". This is not being done.
- Nobody has ever been told how many submissions were made in the initial consultation.

[Referring to submissions from a Bat conservation group regarding dead wood in Coillte forestry] These submissions, amongst many others, have been ignored by IFCI.

The Woodland League wants to contact these people again, to re-ignite their interest in forest certification.

Chairman: Questioned how there can be a second IFCI draft standard, when there has only been a single consultation made by IFCI. [Remained unanswered]

Questioned whether verbal submissions were a valid form of submission.

Kevin Jones: Reckoned that verbal submissions would be valid, but was unsure.

Chairman: Dr. Declan Little ignored verbal submissions, stating that this is FSC rules (i.e. that all submissions need to be in writing).

Teddy Cook: Stated that he would like to see Brendan Kelly and Andrew St. Ledger involved again in the IFCI process. The IFCI process is not an open process, and is dominated by Coillte minions.

Ireland is supposed to be raising its forest coverage to 17%. If people are not careful, it will all be foreign exotics such as Sitka Spruce. There is no specification about the amount of Hardwood/Softwood to be planted. Currently, we have less than 10% hardwood planting.

Chairman: The current standard is completely wrong, and there are several NGOs that will not be let back into the process. The IFCI standard should be abandoned.

Under FSC rules, anyone can draw up a standard. Can the SA recognise the Woodland League's standard?

Kevin Jones: The SA cannot recognise this standard because it is not FSC endorsed. The SA can only recognise FSC endorsed standards. The SA will, however, write to FSC centrally regarding this.

Andrew St. Ledger: Suggested that the SA could recognise both the WL and the IFCI standards, and allow a meeting and a debate. Suggested that the third draft standard be produced as a coalition between the WL and IFCI.

Kevin Jones: Explained his understanding of the FSC certification process.

FSC only accredit a standard if there is consensus about the standard. This is where the local people can make a difference. The fact that most Irish NGOs do not support IFCI needs to be communicated to FSC.

Chairman: It is evident that there needs to be an investigation into the running of IFCI Ltd. There is a single forest manager sitting on the Social Chamber (Dr. Declan Little). Essentially, there are now three economic chambers. The only environmentalist is Dr. Ruth McGrath, and she declined an invitation to be here today.

It was agreed that one person should represent as many people as possible on the Steering Committee. It was agreed that VOICE would represent environmentalists. I don't believe that Caroline Murphy was a member of VOICE when she was on the SC of IFCI [Agreed by Teddy Cook (member of VOICE)]. If not, she shouldn't have been on the SC.

- Teddy Cook:** Expressed his dissatisfaction that a fellow VOICE member (Caroline Murphy) would sit on a committee of a discredited body (IFCI). We need to go directly to FSC, and to ignore IFCI [generally agreed].
- Andrew St. Ledger:** We haven't received a single penny in expenses, despite all our efforts. All of our efforts have been voluntary. The reason we resigned from IFCI is because we felt we couldn't give the energy required to change it.
- Chairman:** Explained his history with IFCI. Explained some of the abuse he received at some of the meetings. Explained that IFCI tried endlessly to remove him from the SC.
- In the four years with IFCI, there was never any consultation produced. When I was illegally expelled, and ordered not to attend meetings, the IFCI agreed several points without my presence.
- Andrew St. Ledger:** The Woodland League fulfils the SA's and FSC's requirements. Enquired if the SA could provide the WL with funding to reengage IFCI, or if Coillte/IFCI could provide the funding.
- Kevin Jones:** Was unsure as to whether this could be done. Acknowledged that this is a problem worldwide.
- Andrew St. Ledger:** Wondered how many other countries have two economic chambers in there certification authorities. Stated that the SA has to demand for the second economic chamber to be removed, and has to question Dr. Declan Little's position on the Social Chamber.
- Chairman:** Drew this section of the meeting to a close. The SA would be taken to several sites in the Derrybrien hills, including the windfarms, to view the carnage first hand.
- Secretary:** Apologised that neither the chairman nor the secretary would be able to attend the second part of the meeting, due to previously arranged pressing matters.
- Martin Collins:** Thanked all that attended, and expresses satisfaction at the meeting. Stated that this was the first time that the people from Derrybrien were allowed have their say, and be listened to.