



An Taisce
The National Trust for Ireland



Letter to Minister Noonan regarding the purchase of lands adjacent to the Glen of the Downs SAC

Dear Minister,

We, the undersigned environmental NGOs, are writing to you regarding an exciting opportunity to expand the Glen of the Downs Nature Reserve, a site of immense natural, cultural and geological significance. The sale of lands at Kindlestown Road Upper, Bellevue, Delgany, Co. Wicklow, presents a unique opportunity for the state to more than double the size of this ancient oak woodland and connect it with Kindlestown Woods. This is a rare opportunity to protect and enhance one of Ireland's oldest nature reserves and a site of international significance as recognised by its designation as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

This opportunity presents itself at a time when your officials have begun the ambitious work of laying the foundations for Ireland's Nature Restoration Plan. Under both the Habitats Directive and the Nature Restoration Law (NRL), Ireland is required to restore the Annex I habitat Old Oak Woodland to favourable conservation status. This will involve investment in restoration measures to address known threats and pressures such as invasive alien species, grazing pressure and problematic native species, all evident in the Glen of the Downs SAC. The NRL also requires the re-establishment of Old Oak Woodlands to achieve favourable reference area. Given that the current surface area of the habitat is only 15.1% of the Favourable Reference Area, this will necessitate an almost seven-fold increase in the habitat on an incremental basis up to 2050. The most ecologically sound way for the state to achieve this will be to expand and connect remnant ancient and long-established woodlands, of which the Glen of the Downs is one of the most significant. This approach has been supported by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, who have noted *"the high rate of fragmentation of this resource (Old Oak Woodland) is cause for concern. As well as area increases, greater connectivity needs to be established to increase gene and species flow between woodlands"*.

This project should be part of a much broader landscape-based approach to nature restoration that looks to utilise the existing network of Natura 2000 sites, public lands and supportive private landowners in East Wicklow to re-connect remnant ancient woodlands across the hills and foothills of the Wicklow Mountains from Knocksink Woods in the North to Glendalough and the Devils Glen in the South. While this plan may seem ambitious, we believe it is a necessary and prudent investment into Wicklow's and Ireland's future. The State will not be alone in this endeavour as there is immense support for nature restoration within communities across Wicklow for Nature Restoration. We have seen this in the local support for an associated [petition](#) and in the growing grass-roots conservation movement in the county, including the now regular collaboration between ReWild Wicklow and the NPWS.

We hope for the government's support in this matter and are at your disposal should you wish to discuss this opportunity in detail.

Yours sincerely



An Taisce
The National Trust for Ireland



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Elaine McGoff'.

Elaine McGoff,
Head of Advocacy,
An Taisce

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kieran Flood'.

Kieran Flood,
General Manager,
Irish Wildlife Trust

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jim Lawlor'.

Jim Lawlor,
Chairperson,
Native Woodland Trust

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Danny Alvey'.

Danny Alvey,
Chairperson,
ReWild Wicklow