

Environmental Law Clinic LW6642

Friends of the Irish Environment Case Note Database Report

1.0 Introduction

Professor Owen McIntyre invited students to participate in the Environmental Law Clinic module (LW6642) <https://ucc-ie-public.courseleaf.com/modules/?details&code=lw6642> which comprised two project teams, each of four students. One team was chosen to work on a database for Friends of the Irish Environment (FIE), an Irish environmental NGO known for engaging in high-profile climate litigation. FIE had an existing internal Google Spreadsheets database containing FIE's entire universe of climate cases, both concluded and pending. The existing database placed FIE's cases into various categories under the headings; 'Won', 'Lost', 'Settled', 'On-going', 'Awaiting Hearing', and 'Admitted Strategic'.

The task allocated to the student team was to design and build a publicly accessible database of FIE's environment and climate cases and embed the same onto FIE's website based on the existing internal Google Spreadsheet. To achieve this assignment, the four students were tasked to review FIE's spreadsheet of cases and select relevant and significant ones in terms of their contribution towards the development of Irish and EU environmental and climate jurisprudence. At the material time for this assignment, the Supreme Court Judgment in *Friends of the Irish Environment v The Government of Ireland [2020] IESC 49*, was still considered a landmark decision on the basis of its implications for future constitutional rights-based environmental and climate-related litigation in Ireland. Therefore, the project kicked off with an analysis of this decision and the resulting case note was used as a blueprint for the rest of the case notes that were developed and published on FIE's website. (See Annex I for final case note template)

2.0 Objective of the Project

With the emergence of rights-based environmental and climate-related litigation in Ireland and the broader European Union, courts have increasingly become a focus of scrutiny by various environmental stakeholders. Primarily, stakeholders are likely to harbour anxiety at the prospects of failure by the courts to hand down consistent and principle-based environmental decisions, driven by forceful environmental principles such as the precautionary principle, sustainable development, *etc.*

The project aimed to develop a user-friendly resource of recent and ongoing environmental litigation in Ireland and provide advice on the possible implications of the courts' decisions in the selected cases. The project also set out to simplify the complex legal issues in the selected FIE environmental cases to facilitate better understanding among different public audience groups.

3.0 Participants

The following student participants undertook this project:

1. Clandestine Mupangani, (Student Number 123116835)
2. Gene John Byrne, (Student Number 119109055)
3. Dylan Krug, (Student Number 123103611)
4. Emmanuel Mumbai, (Student Number 123116660)

4.0 Initial Meetings with FIE

To get an understanding of the existing Google Spreadsheet and of what format the new database might take, multiple meetings were conducted between the students, Professor McIntyre, and Tony Lowes from the FIE. FIE explained the kind of cases they would like to have developed into case notes and published on their website. FIE sent a list of cases and they provided additional support with individual case histories and context.

5.0 Tasks for the Group

The participants met weekly, with each student reporting on the progress they had made on the delegated actions agreed from the previous meeting. These were dynamic as the project started but eventually settled into established roles for the students. One student who had data management and web design expertise was placed in charge of the database presentation and

website infrastructure. The other students were tasked with developing case notes from the list of important cases provided by FIE.

6.0 Database Outline and Design

There were a number of meetings with the group, Professor McIntyre, and FIE to agree on a database type. The responsible student prepared a presentation on the possible designs for the public website database which was shared with FIE. Tasks included analysing the pros and cons of a public Google Sheet database, a website integrated database, and a website click-through database. See the following slide from the presentation:

Pros & Cons

GOOGLE SHEETS DATABASE	WEBSITE INTEGRATED DATABASE	WEBSITE CLICK-THROUGH DATABASE
• Simplest to create / manage • Can easily link to case notes • Familiar to public • All information available at a glance • Most information dense	• Easy to navigate / search • Can easily link to case notes • Professional looking	• Most approachable design • Can easily link to case notes • Professional Looking
• Most intimidating / overwhelming • least professional looking	• Less information at a glance • Moderate amount of effort create / manage	• Most effort required to create / manage • Can be cumbersome in accessing to multiple case notes • Least information at a glance

It took a number of meetings for the group to settle on a design before unanimously deciding an integrated database on the FIE website was ideal. While developing the website database, the student responsible worked regularly with Mr. Lowes to ensure the database would meet client needs. While working on the database the student volunteered their efforts to assist Mr. Lowes with other *ad hoc* website management tasks, including the launching of an FIE desk calendar and graphic design work. To ensure the sustainability and longevity of the database after the completion of the clinical project by the students, a standard operating procedure guide for uploading and managing the completed database content material was written and delivered to FIE. (See Annex II for the SOP)

7.0 Structure of Case Notes.

The other three members of the group had to agree on a structure for the case notes with Professor McIntyre.

- **Introduction.**
- **The Facts.**
 - Arguments of the Parties.
 - Court did not commence.
- **Conclusion.**
- **Implications.**
- **Published Commentaries.**

The starting point for this project was to go through all the cases provided by FIE, researching the cases and assessing the status of each. Each member selected five of the most important cases, which they agreed with Professor McIntyre. The cases were taken from the FIE database and all were different for each member. The cases touched on environmental issues ranging across, *inter alia*, planning controls, biodiversity, and climate change policy. Each time a case note was completed it was sent to Professor McIntyre for approval and he came back with suggested edits and improvements to the case note in track changes. Depending on the case note, this may have occurred a number of times before it was agreed. Some cases selected were deemed unfit to be developed into case notes due to their ongoing nature or due to the case in question having been struck out.

8.0 Research

Each case note had to be researched extensively as the data on the existing FIE database was not always correct or complete, and so validation of the facts was required. There were a number of reasons for this, including appeals, cases that were settled by agreement, a third party winning or losing a case, and cases awaiting a judgement. Therefore, a lot of time was spent on research and confirming the status of a case. This required correspondence with FIE to clarify certain points and at times forwarding information on a case that was not recorded on any database.

9.0 Final Agreement of the Database and Case Notes.

The group invited FIE to attend their weekly meetings on a number of occasions in order to ensure continuity and that FIE were satisfied with how the group were proceeding with the database. On the 12th of April the group, including Professor McIntyre, held a team meeting with the FIE to present the database and agree on the database IT solution and case notes. A member of the group demonstrated how the database could be accessed, navigated, and maintained. All agreed that the database was now a very effective working IT solution with case notes that could be accessed easily, and that the content and case notes were of a very high standard. The final database contained 48 cases, 11 of which contained case notes prepared by the participants.

The database can be viewed at <https://www.friendsoftheirishenvironment.org/case-database>.

Annex I - Case Note Template

Friends of the Irish Environment Ltd and Another v example [2000] IEHC 999

Introduction

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Facts

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Arguments of the Parties

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Finding of the Court.

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Conclusion

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Implications

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Published Commentaries:

Annex II - Case Note Database Standard Operating Procedures

**Friends of the Irish Environment Website Case Note
Management – Standard Operating Procedure**

By Dylan Krug

Preparing a case note

To begin, prepare a case note according to the following template:

Friends of the Irish Environment Ltd and Another v example [2000] IEHC 999

Introduction

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Arguments of the Parties

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Finding of the Court.

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Conclusion

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Implications

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Published Commentaries:

Then, save the case note as a PDF.

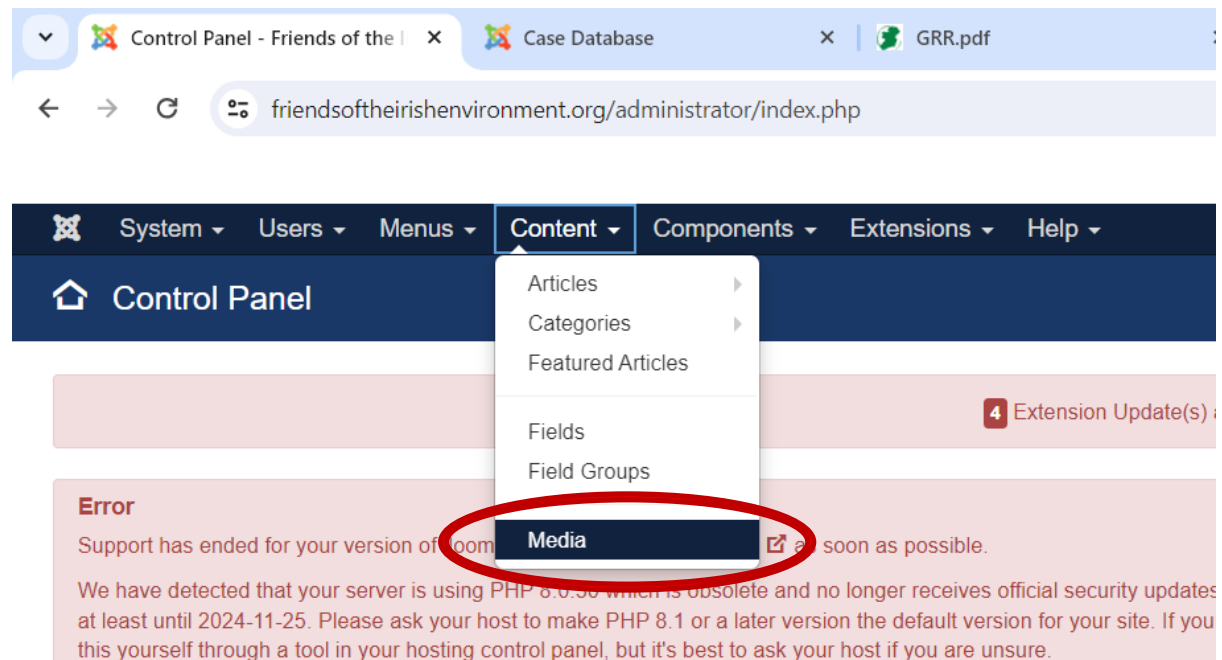
Give the PDF a short, ideally 3-letter, name. A short name will be important for a tidy URL link later. Ensure that the 3-letter name is unique and not identical to a name already associated with a case note.

The PDF is now ready for upload on the FIE website.

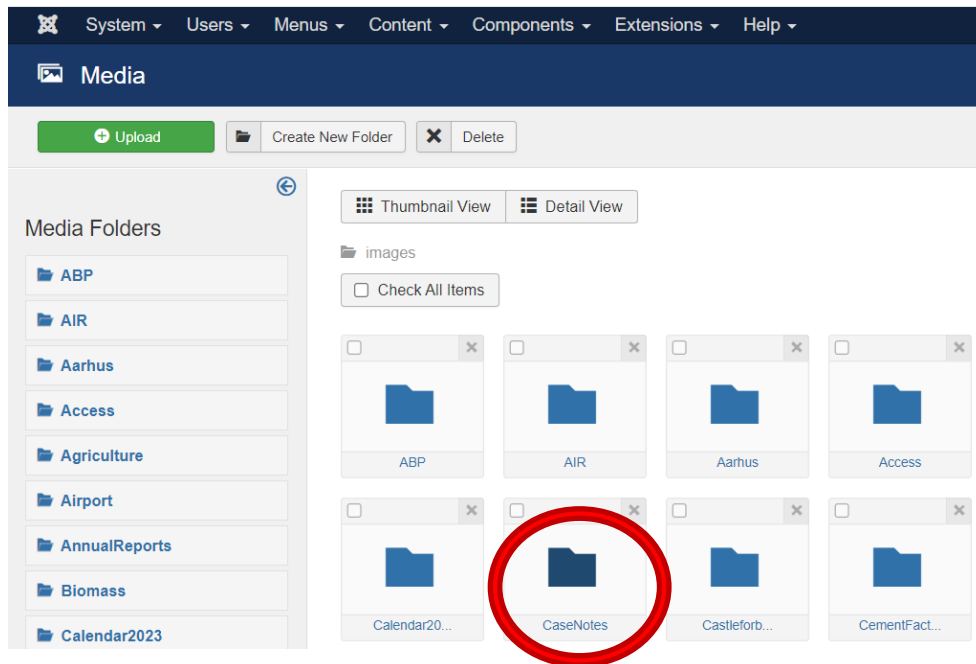
Uploading a PDF Case Note

First, log in as an administrator to the FIE website.

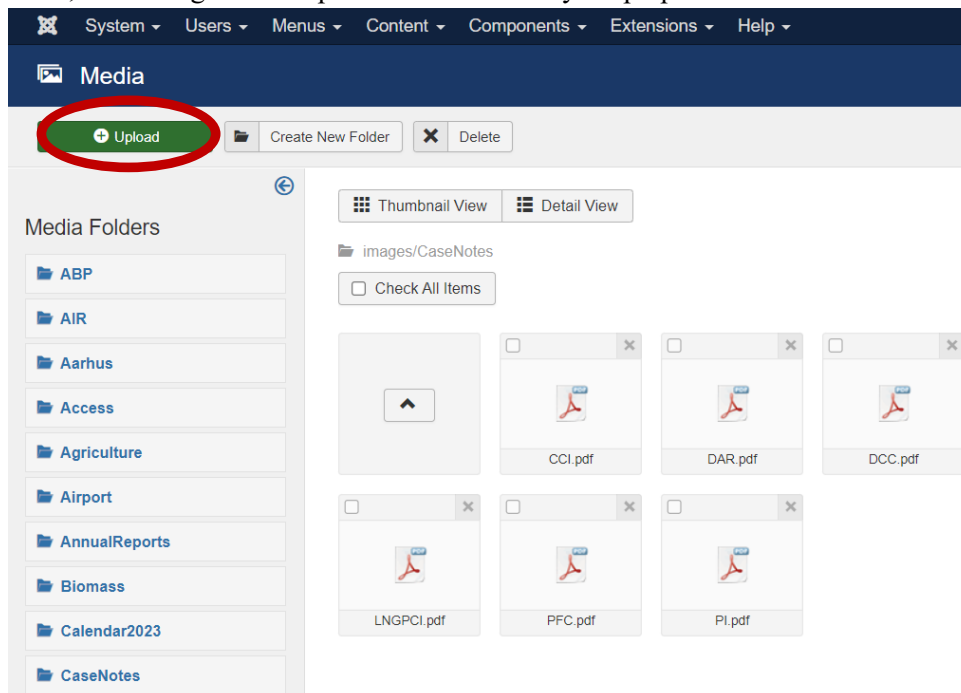
Select the 'Content' tab and click 'Media'.



Search for the 'CaseNotes' folder and click into it



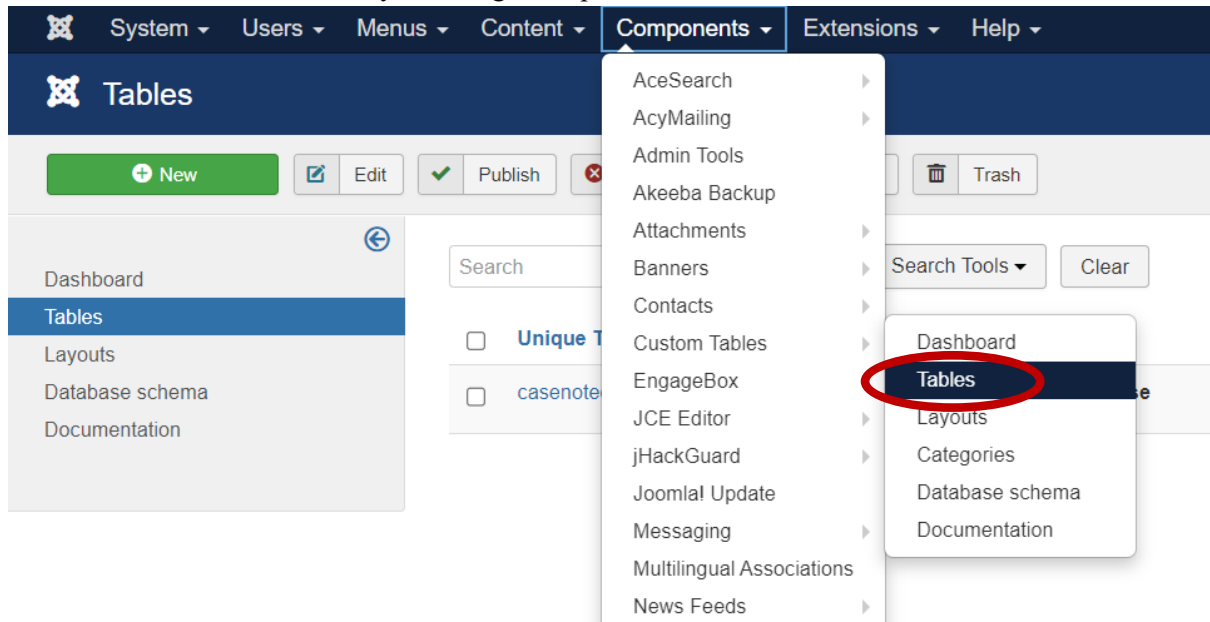
Then, click the green '+ Upload' button to add your prepared PDF.



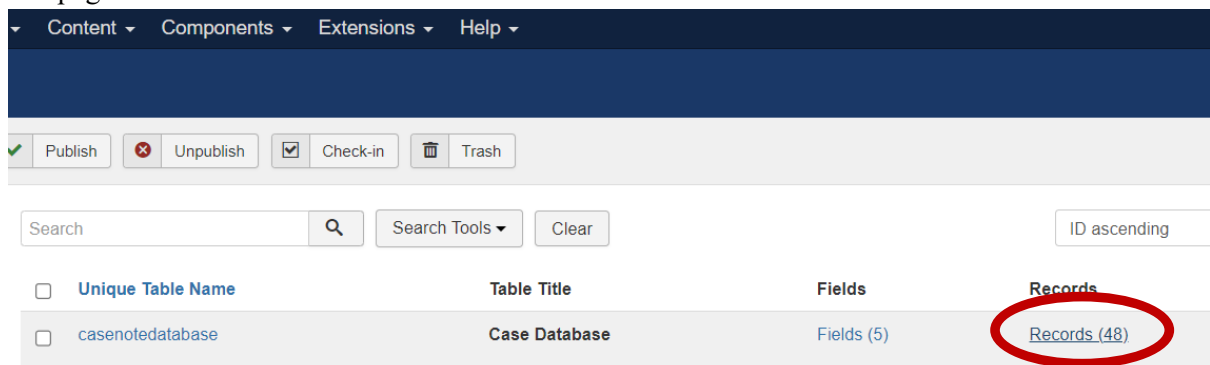
Adding the Uploaded PDF to the Database

Once the file is uploaded to the 'CaseNotes' folder it can then be called upon by the website. This must be manually set up.

Access the case note database by selecting 'Components' -> 'Custom Tables' -> 'Tables'.



From here select the 'Records (X)' to access the current entries. Existing entries may be edited from this page.



Then click on the green '+ New' button to add a new entry.

System Users Menus Content Components Extensions Help

Custom Tables - Table "Case Database" - List of records

+ New Edit Publish Unpublish Delete

Dashboard
Tables
Layouts
Database schema
Documentation

Search Search Tools Clear

☐	Category	Common Name	Case Note
☐	Climate	Galway Ring Road (won)	https://www.friendsoftheirishenvironment.org/images/CaseNotes/GRR.pdf
☐	Climate	Climate Case Ireland (Won)	https://www.friendsoftheirishenvironment.org/images/CaseNotes/CCI.pdf

You will be presented with the following:

System Users Menus Content Components Extensions Help

Add New Record

Save Save & Close Save & New Cancel

Case Database

Category

Common Name

Case Note

Case Name

Further Reading

Fill in **Category**, **Common Name**, and **Case Name** as text. The **Case Note** and **Further Reading** will need to be entered as a link.

The **Case Note** link will be:

<https://www.friendsoftheirishenvironment.org/images/CaseNotes/XXX.pdf> with the XXX being whatever the 3-letter name was assigned to the PDF.

The **Further Reading** link will be the URL for the corresponding case article on the FIE website, should one exist.

See the screenshot below or the [case note database](#) for reference on how to fill in the information for a new entry.

Case Database

Print Found: 48 Result(s)

	Category	Common Name	Case Name	Further Reading
#	Category	Common Name	Case Note	Case Name
☐	1 Climate	Galway Ring Road (won)	https://www.friendsoftheirishenvironment.org/images/CaseNotes/GRR.pdf	https://www.friendsoftheirishenvironment.org/court-cases/climate-cases/galway-ring-road
☐	2 Climate	Climate Case Ireland (Won)	https://www.friendsoftheirishenvironment.org/images/CaseNotes/CCI.pdf	https://www.friendsoftheirishenvironment.org/court-cases/climate-cases/climate-case-ireland

Lastly, hit ‘Save & Close’ to save your work and the entry will be completed. It may take a few minutes for the entry to be reflected on the website, but it is live.