Beware Profit-Driven Lobbyists When it Comes to Housing Policy

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Talented plantsman Darren Topps is a towering presence at the Lismore estate's revitalised gardens

For many years, the place was known as Lismore Park, then Lismore Castle, Co Waterford, until it was acquired by a Bahraini Sheikh, while the upper part of the site was known as Lismore Castle Gardens. This 2,200-acre estate, which had been bought by Lismore and Laura Burlington, was sold on the operating loss of its orchard, which had been maintained as a lawn, is now treated as a hay meadow. Grass is cut to allow for the wildlife, and the trees treated in a sustainable manner. The history of the garden is more than 400 years old, and is hand-scythed rather than burnt, as is common in good practice.

Darren Topps, 41, hand-scythes 90s acre of the place in his own and daughter-in-law, Bill and Laura Burlington, while a new head gardener, Damien Topps, was appointed to take up the position. Lismore has become an important visitor attraction, due to the many activities that take place here, including the 1850s vinehouse, a ridge-and-furrow structure designed by Joseph Paxton, as well as being the 6th Duke's home. It is also home to the Irish Backyard Gardeners, who are involved in the Lismore Community Gardens.

The change in the garden’s atmosphere is noticeable. It is now a more relaxed and informal environment. One of the changes is the abundance of flowers. Traditionally, the gardens were designed with formal beds, but now the garden is more informal, with naturalistic planting. One area, previously hidden from view, is now open to the public.

Paxton was largely responsible for a number of the gardens' better-known features, including the 1850s vinehouse, a ridge-and-furrow structure designed by Joseph Paxton, as well as being the 6th Duke's home. It is also home to the Irish Backyard Gardeners, who are involved in the Lismore Community Gardens.

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