

Belfast Summer University 2014

Following the success of last year's Point Festival 2013, the Green European Foundation Summer University moved to a new venue at Queen's University, Belfast, Northern Ireland. The Summer University took place from Friday 6th June until Sunday 8th June 2014. The theme for this year's event was *"Greening the EU in the context of the Eurosceptic Debate"*.

It was fitting that the Summer University opened by commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Normandy D-Day landings, which also took place on 6th June, and the 100th anniversary of the beginning of World War 1. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University Tony Gallagher conducted the official opening. Nuala Ahern (Chair of Green Foundation Ireland) chaired the first session *"A European history for the 21st century"*. Guest speakers were Philip Orr and Erica Meijers. Philip explored the role of Irish soldiers in the first and second world wars and the impact this had on the island of Ireland. Erica focused on the impact of the period on mainland Europe and how the world wars should now be commemorated across Europe. The subsequent Question and Answer session was very lively and animated. After this session, delegates were entertained by comedian Abie Philbin Bowman and his many new ideas on how to successfully spread the "green" message.

The theme for Saturday morning was *"Rethinking the UK relationship with the EU"*. As an introduction to this session and in relation to other issues being covered over the weekend, Peter Emerson (The de Borda Institute) outlined the potential and benefits of using multi-option polls in complex political situations. The session then commenced and was chaired by David Phinnemore (Queen's University), with Cllr Maggie Chapman (Scottish Green Party), Jean Lambert MEP (UK), Maria Wetterstrand (Cogito) and Cllr John Barry (Northern Ireland Green Party) making up the panel. The prospect of a UK referendum and implications of a UK withdrawal from the EU were explored. The current Scottish referendum campaign, the potential impacts of constitutional change on Britain, Ireland and beyond was discussed. This proved to be a lively session and participants engaged strongly during the Question and Answer session.

The theme for Saturday afternoon was *"How do we make a greener and more socially responsible EU?"*. The session was chaired by Lee McGowan (Queen's University), with Cllr Maggie Chapman (Scottish Green Party), Alex Warleigh-Lack (Surrey University, UK), and Steven Agnew MLA (Northern Ireland Green Party) making up the panel. Many good ideas were floated during this session and participants joined in to further explore these ideas during the Question and Answer session.

Stiofán Nutty then facilitated a World Café style workshop on the theme of "*Energy Future for Europe – Fracking to Fusion?*". Stefan Andreasson (Queen's University) and Cllr Ross Brown (Northern Ireland Green Party) made opening presentations. The participants then dissected and discussed six identified issues. The session concluded with the sharing of these six issues with the two speakers.

John Gormley (Producer of the film) then introduced the Northern Ireland première of "*Creating a People's Europe*", which is a project of GEF for the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament. It was realised with the support of the Heinrich Böll Foundation and the financial support of the European Parliament. A very lively Question and Answer session followed the screening of the film.

After dinner, participants were piped into the entertainment venue by the Major Sinclair Memorial Pipe Band. We were then entertained by Voca Loca, a Belfast women's a capella singing group. An amazing night of entertainment was completed by Tommy Sands who entranced his audience with his stories and music.

A lovely sunny morning saw Sunday's main session "*What Do We Learn From Belfast?*" open with presentations from Cllr John Barry (Northern Ireland Green Party) and Benoît Lechat (Editor-in-Chief of *Green European Journal* of Green European Foundation). The final Question and Answer session was animated and participants shared many ideas on some of the lessons from conflict situations experienced in Belfast. The Summer University then concluded with an historic tour of Milltown Cemetery, led by former Belfast Lord Mayor Tom Hartley.

Stiofán Nutty
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