

A NEW CULTURAL VISION

Green Foundation Ireland Annual Report 2012



Green Foundation Ireland (GFI) is an independent organisation orientated towards an ecological vision of society. It is affiliated to the Green European Foundation (GEF).

GFI has a vision of cultural change that will make Ireland an international hub in the response to climate change, and will develop practical solutions to the environmental challenges of the 21st century that create prosperity for people and ensure ecological balance.

GFI aims, through education, to create public support for a sustainable society and economy in Ireland and the EU. It will engage with artistic and scientific disciplines to create a new environmental narrative in Ireland and Europe. It will promote a vision that values art and culture as spheres of thought and action and educates people in how to close the gap between art and science.

GFI aims to restore respect and participation to public life across the political spectrum. To do this it will encourage active citizenship and political education in a broad sense. The European origins of civic society go back to Greece and Rome. Both Plato and Aristotle discussed the role of the citizen in participating in the common good. A functioning society requires active, educated and responsible citizens who understand that, without their participation in the life of the community, the institutions of government or of civil society cannot operate in a sustainable way.

This common European heritage can enable us, as citizens of the EU, to participate more fully in the governance of the European Union in response to the complex and perplexing systems of governance it has created and the crisis of economic collapse and environmental degradation and climate change which we all face.

Green Foundation Ireland was initiated by Tommy Simpson, who had been a founder member of two charities, Sonairte and Energy Action. Tommy had circulated the idea of a Green Foundation in Ireland over a number of years, and he had been asked to become a member of the General Assembly of Green European Foundation when it was founded.

In spring 2011 he brought together a steering group with the purpose of creating a Foundation whose aim would be to educate and disseminate ideas on green and environmental issues. In summer 2011 this group circulated the idea to a number of people in the green movement who had indicated their interest.

Meetings were held on 6, 11 and 22 August 2011 in Dublin and agreement was reached to proceed with the setting up of a Foundation to be called Green Foundation Ireland. It would take as models Sonairte and the Green Foundations in Europe, such as Heinrich Böll Foundation. Funding would be sought for seminars and publications, as well as educational and cultural activities, which would promote and educate people in the need for a sustainable society.

In November 2011 registration of Green Foundation Ireland was completed by Company Secretary, Brendan Hanifin, with the support of Founding Director, Tommy Simpson, and a Board was constituted in December of that year.

In January 2012, GEF and GFI reached agreement to proceed with two projects to be funded by Green European Foundation, which were a summer school in Carnsore Point in Co. Wexford, and a research project on renewable energy and democracy. GFI also agreed on a climate change project called the Western World Forum, which was to be funded by the Tony Ryan Trust.

The GFI Board proceeded during January and February 2012 to create a vision and aim for GFI which would be published on its website. During March and April a website (www.greenfoundationireland.ie) was created with the help of Pixelpod, and a public launch was announced for 4 May 2012 in the Mansion House, Dublin.

The Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor Andrew Montague, opened the event and welcomed the launch of Green Foundation Ireland and its aims. GFI were also happy to have Pierre Jonckeer, Co-President of Green European Foundation, to speak at the launch. Pierre spoke in a heartfelt way about the crisis in Europe and the need for solidarity and understanding between the people of Europe.

GFI Summer School in Carnsore took place over the weekend of 7-9 September and was a great success. GFI would like to thank Dan Boyle, the Carnsore Summer School Director, for his creative work in organising a superb programme of events. Thanks to Pierre Jonckeer and Rebecca Harms MEP for attending and to the wonderful panels of speakers who made the event interesting and challenging.

Thanks especially to Tommy Sands for an amazing "music of protest" workshop, Abie Philbin Bowman and Leviathan (Political Cabaret for providing comedy and challenge). Thanks also to Bill Walsh for recording the event on video (which we now have as a DVD) and to all the speakers. A special thanks also to the Point Festival team of Alison Martin, Ann O'Conarain and Danny Forde.

In September 2012 four distinguished new members joined the GFI Board – **Dr. Valerie Bresnihan**, former Executive Director of the Irish Penal Reform Trust and expert in political science and public policy research; **Dr. John Dillon**, Professor Emeritus at TCD and a scholar of Platonist philosophy, a member of the Royal Irish Academy and the Academy of Athens; **Mary Hawkes-Greene**, Director of the Burren College of Art; and **Dr. Pat McCusker**, a forestry scientist and lecturer in biodiversity at UCD.

In mid-November GFI held a seminar on *The Future of Europe*, in Tailors' Hall, Dublin, with speakers from Ireland, the UK, Germany and Belgium. We were privileged to have the German Ambassador to Ireland, Dr. Eckhard Lübke, speak to us and we were able, through the work of Bill Walsh, to put videos of the speakers at the event up on the GFI website.

In February 2013 the Climate Gathering was held in the Burren College in Ballyvaughan, Co. Clare. There were 60 people gathered for this important first step in the planned series of events to consider action on climate change. They included eminent scientists and experts from the USA and across the EU. GFI wish to warmly thank Ryan Meade, the Director of the Climate Gathering, for working tenaciously to create such a successful event.

See www.climategathering.org

Our successful first year ended with the *Heinrich Böll and Ireland* Anniversary Seminar in the Mansion House, Dublin on 2 May 2013. This was attended by René Böll (the son of Heinrich), by Gisela Holfter (author of *Heinrich Böll and Ireland*), and by a representative from the German Embassy in Dublin. Philosopher Dr. Brendan O'Byrne, Curator of TCD Plato Centre, spoke on the philosophy of consumerism and its discontents.

FUTURE EVENTS 2013

Carnsore Summer School 2013

This will take place in Carne over the weekend of 23-25 August. Another great programme is underway and is available on our website from early June. The event is funded by GEF as in 2012.

Food Seminar

This event will take place in the European Parliament Offices in Molesworth Street, Dublin on 11 October and is currently in preparation.

Further seminars will be arranged for the autumn on topics of interest.

Appendix 1 – ABOUT GFI

GFI is an independent organisation orientated towards an ecological vision of society. We determine our own priorities and projects. We are affiliated to the Green European Foundation (GEF).

Through the GEF we are allied with other European Green Foundations, such as Grüne Bildungswerkstatt (Austria); Oikos Foundation (Belgium); Heinrich Böll Foundation (Germany); Alexander Langer Foundation (Italy); Cogito Foundation (Sweden).

STRUCTURE

GFI is a company limited by guarantee having no share capital.

Its decision-making body consists of a Board of nine directors and one administrator, who are: Nuala Ahern (*Chair*); Valerie Bresnihan; John Dillon; Sandy Dunlop; Mary Hawkes-Greene; Brendan Hanifin (*Company Secretary*); Patrick McCusker; Eileen McDermott; Tommy Simpson; and Ann O'Conarain (*Administrator*).

The Board and Administrator volunteer their time and commitment to furthering the vision of GFI.

PROJECTS

GFI operates through specific projects for which it seeks funding from appropriate sources. There were four such projects during 2012:

- Carnsore Summer School: Climate Change: Myth and Reality (September 2012) – *Funding*: GEF.
- Tailors' Hall Seminar: The Future of Europe (November 2012) – *Funding*: GEF.
- Research Project: Participatory Democracy and Renewable Energy – *Funding*: GEF.
- Feasibility Study: Western World Convention on Climate Change – *Funding*: Tony Ryan Trust.

FUNDING

Funding is project specific, with projects being selected by the Board and approved on merit. Individuals and organisations may apply to GFI to approve their projects and have them forwarded by GFI to appropriate funding organisations.

STRATEGIC PARTNERS

To achieve our goals we seek strategic partnerships with other organisations who share our values.

Our current partner is Green European Foundation (GEF).

POLICIES

GFI has no policy orientation other than to explore creative ways of thinking about sustainability and good governance in Ireland and the EU. It is, in a nutshell, a "think tank" with a creative vision.