



GREEN FOUNDATION IRELAND

Annual Report 2015

Green Foundation Ireland aims, through education, to inspire the public to work towards a sustainable society for Ireland.

2015 was a very hard-working year for Green Foundation Ireland, during which we were delighted that **Duncan Stewart** accepted our invitation to become Chair as well as Director of GFI. This year we concentrated on establishing our development and operational strategies and will continue to focus on these areas in the coming year.

However, two successful events were held during the year – the Burren Summer School and the ECOPRO Seminar. We were also involved in the five Climate Conversations undertaken by the Climate Gathering from March to May, while in December they held an event to take stock of COP21 and the Paris Agreement. The Climate Gathering originated as a project known as the "*Western World Convention*" and is an initiative of Green Foundation Ireland.

18 MARCH 2015:

Climate Conversations: Session I – "Communicating the Challenge"

Held in Liberty Hall, Dublin

The first of the Climate Conversations was a panel style discussion with audience participation, art and music. **Ryan Meade** of the Climate Gathering chaired the event and speakers on the panel included:

- **George Marshall** (author of "*Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate Change*" and founder of the Climate Outreach Information Network).
- **David Begg** (General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions).
- **Claire O'Connor** (former international director for Vice President Al Gore's Alliance for Climate Protection).
- **Oisín Coghlan** (Friends of the Earth).
- **Terry Prone** (Media Expert, Popular Commentator and Author).

The collaboration between organisations focused on economic development, labour rights and social and environmental justice is symbolic of the greater co-operation we will need to change our response to the issue. We seek to understand what cultural and social changes are needed, what costs and opportunities may arise and what economic model will best serve all our needs in making this transition. This is why everyone needs to be in the conversation, not just the institutions supporting this initiative but every institution and every citizen with an interest in the future of this island and this planet. We want to provide a safe space where different views can be expressed and shared.

26 MARCH 2015:

Climate Conversations: Session II – "A New Economy"

Held in Trinity College Dublin

The second of the Climate Conversations focused on economic development, labour rights and social and environmental justice. Chaired by **Emma McNamara of RTÉ**, speakers included:

- **Sharan Burron** (General Secretary of International Trade Union Confederation).
- **Gabriel Darcy** (CEO of Town of Monaghan Co-Op).
- **Dr Rory O'Donnell** (Director of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC)).
- **Sean O'Driscoll** (CEO of Glen Dimplex).
- **Robert Watt** (Secretary General of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform).

The conversation sought to understand what cultural and social changes are needed, what costs and opportunities may arise and what economic model will best serve all our needs in making a transition to better address climate change.

8 APRIL 2015:

Climate Conversations: Session III – "The Sustainable Use of Our Land"

Held in Guinness Storehouse, Dublin

Food was the focus of the third Climate Conversation. This was a particularly interesting discussion that looked at how we grow food, the state of today's agriculture in Ireland and whether it leaves the land and environment in better condition for the next generations of farmers.

Chef **Katie Sanderson**, social entrepreneur **Iseult Ward** from Food Cloud, cheesemonger **Seamus Sheridan** and greengrocer **Jack Roche** formed the panel and added some interesting insights to the debate about food production and food waste. Katie Sanderson prepared some rubbish food (from waste food) for the audience to taste. The poet farmer **Peter Fallon** told the audience about his life digging with pen and shovel. **Paul Deane** from UCC elaborated on Irish agriculture and carbon emissions after which Nutfield scholar **Mary Delaney**, **Andrew Doyle** (then chairman of the Dáil Committee on Agriculture), **Rogier Schulte** of Teagasc and comedian and farmer **Breda Larkin** discussed the grassroots issue of how we are using our land. This was chaired by *The Irish Times* restaurant critic **Catherine Cleary**. Finally, there was some traditional Irish music with a Galician twist from fiddle and guitar duo Horns.

20 APRIL 2015:

Climate Conversations: Session IV – "Prophetic Voices"

Held in Christchurch Cathedral, Dublin

This conversation focused on how a response to climate change requires a shift in societal values. A common rebuttal to taking climate action is 'why bother? What difference will it make?'. This session sought to address where we can go to find the spiritual and ethical motivation we need to face the challenge of climate change.

This session explored where we can find inspiration in modern Ireland and how can spirituality and faith help to rebuild a deeper connection and appreciation of nature which is important in addressing environmental issues. People from different faiths and spiritual traditions attended, as well as individuals from different generations charting their own path in response to climate justice. The event was supported and enhanced by choirs and soloists and the setting of the cathedral added to the occasion and significance of the topic being discussed.

10 MAY 2015:

Climate Conversations: Session V – "The Call to New Horizons"

Held in the Abbey Theatre, Dublin

This conversation was the final climate conversation and provided a fitting end to an original series of debates. 'The Call to New Horizons' explored climate change from a range of diverse voices as part of a creative process to explore how best to address this enormous challenge.

Speakers included **Dorothy Cross** (artist), **Mark Patrick Hederman** (Abbot of Glenstal Abbey), **Michael Gibbons** (archaeologist and raconteur) and **Tommy Tiernan** (comedian, actor and writer).

The conversation explored what partner organisations and the audience felt called to commit to in response to the unique challenge and opportunity of this time. This conversation provided a fitting end to a diverse series of climate conversations. The different voices heard included artistic, comedic and spiritual. The previous four conversations were also reflected upon with participation between the panel and the audience.

14 and 15 AUGUST 2015: Burren Summer School

Art, Food Security and Climate Change

Held in the Burren College of Art, Ballyvaughan, County Clare

The Green European Foundation, with the support of Green Foundation Ireland, hosted a Symposium titled "Art, Food Security and Climate Change" as part of The Burren Annual 2015 "Beyond Sustainability". The event addressed the question of sustainability and culture by presenting a combination of art exhibition, seminar and workshop, plus a field trip and tasting event.

FRIDAY 14 AUGUST 2015:

POTATO/BATATA Exhibition

Duncan Stewart opened the Exhibition, which was a collaborative project between artist **Deirdre O'Mahony** and Chicago-based artist **Frances Whitehead**, in the Burren College of Art Gallery and made an impassioned plea for action on Climate Change.

SATURDAY 15 AUGUST 2015:

Seminar and Workshop: Art, Food Security and Climate Change

The morning Seminar "Art, Food Security and Climate Change" addressed the themes of the Exhibition and their broader social and societal impact in the current climate of environmental crisis.

The President of the Burren College of Art, **Mary Hawkes-Greene** welcomed participants and **Nuala Ahern** outlined the inspiration behind the event. **Conor McGrady**, the Dean of Academic Affairs at the Burren College of Art, introduced the theme of the morning seminar, after which Deirdre O'Mahony led participants in a tour of the Exhibition. The Seminar was chaired by **Seamus Sheridan**, who is a Galway cheesemonger and the Irish Green Party Spokesperson for Food.

The first presentation was by **Cristian Bettini** (FoodCultura, Barcelona) who introduced a video of a potato festival in Lima, Peru and spoke about the importance of food in the everyday experience of nature. **Eileen Hutton** (Artist and Lecturer in Art and Ecology, Burren College of Art) gave a presentation on sustainability and art. **Oscar Rando** (Fundació Nous Horitzons, Catalonia) gave a rousing description of the local social and environmental movements around the El Prat airport in Barcelona, and how they had retained land there for cultivation in the face of attempts to locate Euro Vegas on this rich agricultural land.

The panel speakers were followed by a Round Table Discussion "Generating Change? Arts Practice and Rural Sustainability" chaired by Conor McGrady.

Lunch was followed by an afternoon Workshop entitled *De Smaak te Pakken* ('Getting a Taste for It'). **Esther Boukema**, who introduced the Workshop, is an artist, designer, food and nature lover who develops and teaches Experiential Food Education. After the Workshop a Field Trip was undertaken and included visits to Celtic Salads and Linnalla Ice Cream, two local enterprises that are part of the Burren Food Trail, and which recently won the prestigious European EDEN award for innovation and sustainability in the food industry. These Burren farmers spoke of their decision to farm differently and to create added value by dealing directly with customers.

A live Skype conversation between Deirdre O'Mahony in the Burren and Frances Whitehead in Chicago and a simultaneous pan-Atlantic potato tasting consisting of regional potato/sweet potato culinary specialities in the Burren and the US was followed by a dinner. At the end of the Round Table Discussion between the panel and participants, it was agreed the conversation on the theme of sustainability and culture was worthwhile and the idea of an event in Barcelona in 2016 was agreed. Nuala Ahern, Cristian Bettini and Oscar Rando said they would make progress on organising such an event.

A video recording was produced and edited by **Emer Cooney of Science Media** and can be seen under the "Audio & Video" section on our website www.greenfoundationireland.ie.

28 NOVEMBER 2015: Morning ECOPRO Seminar **Sustainable Communities – Sustainable Jobs: Developing the Circular Economy** *Held in Dublin City University*

ECOPRO (Ecological Production) is the successor of the previous SERIND project and nine Green foundations from different regions and member states of the European Union (Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Croatia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Spain (Catalonia) and the United Kingdom) are involved in exploring pathways for a transition towards ecological production as part of a sustainable economy that is low-carbon and fosters an equal society.

Amongst the range of expert speakers at this Seminar, which was chaired by **Duncan Stewart** (Environmentalist, Broadcaster and Chair of GFI), were: **John Barry** (Professor of Green Political Economy at QUB and Director of GFI); **Martin Charter** (Director of the Centre for Sustainable Design at the University for the Creative Arts in Farnham, Surrey); **Ichin Cheng** (originally from Taiwan and is Director and Co-Founder of Sustainable Innovation Lab in the UK); **Sandy Dunlop** (Terenure Initiative); **Tommy Simpson** (Projects Co-Ordinator at GFI) and **Bernie Walsh** (Sunflower Recycling).

The key points made by our speakers were as follows:

Martin Charter explained that UCA integrates sustainability into every course they run, focusing on how resources are used efficiently, and it is a centre for sustainable design for sustainable futures. He noted that climate change is central to much discussion now, with even Pope Francis focusing on the injustices associated with climate change and Barack Obama also highlighting the effects of climate change in poorer countries. He remarked that the current status with many companies and industries is to 'take, make, dispose' rather than the circular economy ('make, use, return'). He outlined that by 2050, 80% of the population in Western societies will live in cities, with 60% of people in the developing world moving to cities. Crowd-sourcing and funding ideas, together with Hackathon's Open Source, Fixperts, Fab Labs and Imaginariums, are now more relevant for sustainable development. There are 18 Repair Cafés in the UK, with many due to open in Ireland.

Ichin Cheng spoke about the Europe 2020 Strategy, the EC 2020 Strategy and highlighted the need for companies now to be "clean". In Japan, Sekisui Chemical Company is reusing system for house-building; in the UK, Bio Be fee grounds to create advanced bio fuels; in Taiwan, the city of Taipei has turned an old repair street to a new craft and creative street, which is now a tourist attraction.

John Barry spoke about the need to move away from the three Bs (Buildings, Banks and Boutiques) to the three Ls (Libraries, Laundromats and Light Rail). He highlighted the need to share products we use every day, for example, power drills, lawn mowers, etc. He advocated a move away from our fixation on GDP to a post-growth society.

Bernie Walsh's main points were that funding has been cut and the government does not appear to see the benefit of community organisations. Sunflower Recycling is involved in many recycling projects including furniture, clothes and mattress recycling. They have created a sustainable social economy enterprise in mattress recycling, saving the environmental waste which would otherwise accumulate from dumping mattresses.

Sandy Dunlop's presentation focused on how the Green movement scares people but doesn't recruit them! Sandy is part of the Terenure rugby club transformation which is now a highly successful club with state of the art facilities. He noted that the collective know what is needed – however 1% of the population tend to own 99% of the resources.

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10 DECEMBER 2015:

Climate Gathering: "Ways Forward – Considering the COP21 Agreement"

Held in the Edmund Burke Theatre, Trinity College Dublin

This event took stock of COP21 and the Paris Agreement, in collaboration with the Environmental Humanities initiative in Trinity College Dublin and the Climate Conversations partnership (Climate Gathering, Christian Aid, Environmental Pillar, Ibec, ICTU, Trócaire and new partner National Youth Council of Ireland).

With our Board firmly established and Duncan Stewart in place as our Chair, Green Foundation Ireland is looking forward with renewed vigour to advancing the vision for an ecologically sustainable economy and society in Ireland.