



GREEN FOUNDATION IRELAND

Annual Report 2016

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

2016 was a really busy but rewarding year for Green Foundation Ireland, during which we held a book launch, three seminars, a public debate, a Summer School in Dublin on migration, and a sustainability festival in County Meath. You can find links to our reports, videos and photos of each event by clicking on the name of the event below.

8 APRIL 2016:

Book Launch: [Green Values, Religion and Secularism](#)

Held in the Dublin Offices of the European Parliament

Our first event of the year was a book launch by the eco-theologian **Seán McDonagh**. The book, "*Green Values, Religion and Secularism*", published by Green European Foundation, was edited by **Nuala Ahern** (Publications Editor of Green Foundation Ireland) and **Erica Meijers** (Editor-in-Chief of *de Helling*, the quarterly of Bureau de Helling, the Dutch Green Foundation). They interviewed environmental activists across Europe whose political motivations resonated with religious values. Their interviewees included the former Irish Green Party TDs, Trevor Sargent and Mary White, as well as John Barry. The book launch began a series of seminars on the topic across Europe.

22 APRIL 2016:

Seminar: [Flooding and Climate Change in Ireland](#)

Held in University College Dublin

This was followed by a Seminar, "*Flooding and Climate Change in Ireland*", in partnership with UCD Earth Institute to celebrate Earth Day – it was also the day of the signing of the Paris Climate Change Agreement. Speakers at the seminar, who included **Eoin O'Neill** (Lecturer in Environmental Policy at UCD Planning and Environmental Policy and UCD Earth Institute), **Cara Augustenborg** (Chair of Friends of the Earth Ireland) and **Duncan Stewart** (Environmentalist, Broadcaster, Chair of Green Foundation Ireland), noted that in Ireland we had unrealistic expectations of what flood defences can achieve.

However there is no doubt flooding will continue in Ireland unless we develop a national coherent policy to address this ever worsening situation because of the increasing risk of flooding posed by climate change. Recent experience of flooding in Ireland was beginning to change government policy although much more needed to be done through our system of education to raise the awareness of this serious challenge and the media was also criticised for their failure to cover the subject.

27 and 28 MAY 2016:

Dublin Summer School: [European Migration: Causes and Effects](#)

Held in National College of Ireland

May was marked by our annual Summer School, the theme of which was "*European Migration: Causes and Effects*". For the first time the Summer School was held in Dublin, very close to where the Jeanie Johnston ship is moored (which made 16 emigrant journeys to North America between 1847 and 1855, carrying over 2,500 people with no loss of life).

Opening speakers **Brian Killoran** (CEO of the Immigrant Council of Ireland), **Catherine Devitt** (Environmental Justice Officer at the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice) and **Mark Fielding** (CEO of Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association) discussed how vulnerable children were in migration situations. They addressed how climate change was contributing to the numbers of people that were being forced to migrate. It was important to welcome new migrants as they provided economic skills and abilities.

Barry Andrews (CEO of GOAL) and **Nessa Childers** (Independent MEP for Dublin) outlined measures that the EU and national governments should take to improve this crisis situation. Real political leadership was now required at both EU and national levels to really tackle the crisis in an effective manner. Participants engaged strongly during the discussion. **Maria Giovanna Manieri** (Advisor on Migration and Asylum at the European Parliament) and **Duncan Stewart** explored the immediate problems and experiences of migrants trying to enter the EU, showed initiatives that were being used by some to ameliorate the crisis and suggested measures that could be taken at EU and national level that would improve the current situation.

Sandy Dunlop gave a presentation on how Ireland's strong heritage of myths and legends involving continual inward and outward migration could be used to great effect now to help the migrant crisis. **Duncan Stewart** outlined how the collection of short video clips of positive migration stories would help change attitudes, and **John Barry** (Professor of Green Political Economy at Queen's University Belfast) spoke about counteracting populist propaganda. Sandy also facilitated an interactive session where a number of people who had migrated to Ireland shared stories about their journey and experience of Irish life.

10 JUNE 2016:

Seminar: [FULL CIRCLE: A Community Approach to Sustainable Work in a Circular Economy](#)

Held in Cloughjordan Eco-Village, County Tipperary

This Seminar, in partnership with Cultivate, was a follow-up to the ECOPRO event (held in 2015 at DCU) and the SERIND event (held in 2014 at DIT Bolton Street in Dublin). Eight Green foundations from different regions and member states of the European Union (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Finland, 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.

Focusing on sustainable jobs, this seminar explored a commons and community approach to the circular economy and local livelihoods in Ireland. The seminar asked what role do community groups, co-operatives and local enterprises have in the circular economy? What kinds of jobs and livelihoods can be sustained? Under what conditions can the circular economy help us accelerate the transition to a resilient and low carbon society?

Speakers included **Peadar Kirby** (Professor Emeritus of International Politics and Public Policy University of Limerick), **Cillian Lohan** (European Economic and Social Committee), **Claire Downey** (National Co-Ordinator of Community Reuse Network Ireland), **Tommy Simpson** (Green Foundation Ireland) and **Davie Philip** (Cultivate).

The keynote presentation was given by Belgian based **Anne Snick** (University Centre Kortenberg / Flora Network), who is a researcher on sustainability with a systems approach. She has experience in trans-disciplinary research and her field of study is mainly how to facilitate transition by combining social sharing, biomimicry, the circular economy and local currencies.

9 JULY 2016:

Belfast Debate: [Green Values and Progressive Politics: Religion, humanism and the ethical basis for political activism](#)

Held in Queen's University Belfast

The Debate was opened by **John Barry** (Professor of Green Economy, Queen's University Belfast), who noted that the publication of "*Green Values, Religion and Secularism*" was a recognition of the need to take seriously the religious dimension of public life which continued to shape even 'secular' practice in many, often positive, ways. He also pointed to the 2015 Papal encyclical *Laudato si'* as a powerful sign that the Catholic church, with all its global influence, was putting forward environmental issues as being worthy of universal concern. Perhaps all sections of society, not just religious ones, had failed to take with adequate seriousness the challenge of the environment.

The Panel Debate involved five participants: **Tanya Jones** (Politician, Green Party NI) made an impassioned plea for a consideration of our common humanity and the need for it to direct our political project in the face of destructive and often oppressive policies. **Brian Ashworth** (Pastor, Kingdom Harvest Church) set out to correct the view that belief in God had diminished in the United Kingdom to the point of irrelevance as well as encouraging a more appreciative attitude towards the participatory democracy that operates in this country. **Terry Moseley** (NI Humanist Association) called for a renewed attention to the wonder of nature and humanity in all of their complexity, arguing that this positive stance, not a dismissal of religious belief, forms the basis of humanist thought and engagement in Green issues in particular.

Matt Williams (Adjunct Lecturer, Union Theological College and Youthlink NI) pointed out that biblically, Christianity can be seen to encourage public, rigorous, and non-violent engagement but that its theological, historical and ideological basis itself must inevitably be engaged with in public discourse, as it is this which unavoidably shapes the outlook of Christians on practical and social issues.

Peter Doran (Queen's University Belfast) took Michel Foucault as an example of somebody thoroughly opposed to religion in its dominant institutionalised form, but who saw the importance of a connection with the self through the earth that could be engaged with through spiritual practice.

Contributors to this Debate included **Nuala Ahern** and **Erica Meijers**, the co-editors of "*Green Values, Religion and Secularism*".

21-23 OCTOBER 2016:

Weekend Sustainability Festival: [Moynalty Goes Wild](#)

Held in Moynalty Steam Threshing Museum, County Meath

The next event that we organised was "*Moynalty Goes Wild*", Moynalty's first weekend Sustainability Festival. Most of the events were held in the Moynalty Steam Threshing Museum in County Meath, with the final event of building a badger sett taking place in Golashane Nature Reserve nearby. Funding from Local Agenda 21 Partnership Fund at Meath County Council allowed us to make the entire weekend free of charge.

Over 250 people came along to the event which began on Friday with an upcycling workshop, where adults and children brought along old pieces of furniture. **Valerie Shekleton** showed how to turn old pots, chairs and picture frames into fabulous shabby chic pieces to be proud of.

Duncan Stewart, Chair of Green Foundation Ireland, referred on Saturday to the challenges facing small farmers and environmentalist such as flooding. He also presented Peter and Margaret Britain and John Joe O'Callaghan with a bat box and bird feeder in recognition of the work they have done throughout their lives, making their farms into local nature reserves. **Pamela Hosford** and **Ronan Watters** from Grow It Yourself (GIY) North Meath spoke about edible public spaces, including growing food beside the Kells Heritage Centre – so you can snack as you pass by!

"Bats are for life, not just for Hallowe'en" was a presentation by **Brian Keeley**, showing the practical and easy measures you can take to protect our rare bats. **Barry Kavanagh** from PATCH spoke about joining up patches of nature, so a butterfly or other animal could commute along hedgerows from Cork to North Meath. He is putting these plans in place in several towns in Meath and Cavan. **Goska Wilkowska** gave a terrifying talk about Aliens – plants which invade and threaten to destroy our native species. And **Gary Connolly** from Activ8 Energies gave us the good news that there is more sun in Ireland than we think – and we should be using solar to provide electricity. **Patrick Farrelly** was another renewal energy speaker, talking about biomass use and even using grass as insulation.

Sunday saw a group of 50 farmers get together on Golashane Nature Reserve to build an artificial badger sett. This is the first of its type to be built by a local community to encourage badgers to their area. Michael Stafford managed the digger, Reuben McElwaine built the boxes, and lots of small children were needed to stuff the badger homes with straw and peanuts. Long pipes underground linked the chambers.

The evening finished with a fascinating talk on bees by **Gordon Mackey**, where we had a close look at the bees, the smoker and a taste of honey.

10 NOVEMBER 2016:

Seminar: [Green Values, Religion, Secularism and the ethical basis for social and environmental action](#)

Held in Trinity College Dublin

Our final event of the year was a Seminar "*Green Values, Religion, Secularism and the ethical basis for social and environmental action*", which took place in partnership with the Irish School of Ecumenics in Trinity College Dublin. The panel of four speakers was chaired by **Iain Aitken**, Professor of Peace Studies at the Irish School of Ecumenics; the speakers were: **Catriona Russell** (Lecturer in Environmental Ethics at Trinity College Dublin, formerly Director MPhil in Ecology and Ethics at All Hallows College, Dublin), **Erica Meijers** (Theologian and Co-Editor of "*Green Values, Religion and Secularism*"), **Sorley McCaughey** (Director of Advocacy and Policy at Christian Aid), and **Francis Duffy** (Green Party Councillor at South Dublin County Council, Lecturer and Architect).

Poverty and inequality compound biodiversity loss through competition for habitat. If the developed world consumes in a way that cannot be universalised, then this is unjust. It is necessary to not only engage in practical solutions to injustice but to also embrace a contemplative ecology which asks us to pay attention to the world and to love and be mindful of the world; love is a powerful source of motivation. An ethic of justice through love can be found not only in Christianity but also in Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism.

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to each and every one of our Board and Management Team who have all contributed so much to our successful year on a voluntary basis. We would also like to thank **John Pett**, our resident photographer, and you can see photos of all our events in the [Gallery Section](#) of our website. Thanks are particularly due to our videographer, **Emer Cooney** of [Science Media](#) for producing and editing the videos for us. Science Media uses video as an engaging way to communicate science to the wider public. It was established in 2013 by Emer, an Irish biologist and videographer, who is particularly focused on improving awareness around environmental issues and on bridging the gap between scientists and the public. All her videos produced for Green Foundation Ireland can be viewed in the [Audio and Video Section](#) of our website.

The Board of Green Foundation Ireland is looking forward to building on the successes of 2016 in the year ahead. In addition to continuing to host networking and information sharing events, we are planning to broaden the range of our activities in 2017 with particular focus on developing environmental and sustainability educational programmes for primary, secondary and third level institutions.