



# REPORT

## Green Foundation Ireland

Moynalty's weekend  
Sustainability Festival

## Moynalty Goes Wild



**Moynalty Steam Threshing Museum, Co. Meath**

***Friday 19 – Sunday 21 October 2018***

### ***Friday 19 October 2018:***

Friday night began with upcycling with **Valerie Shekelton**. Families came along, and Valerie first showed us how to paint and cover flower pots, before trying out our new skills on old furniture from the Vincent de Paul shop in Kells.

Meanwhile the SWAP SHOP was in action, with clothes, bags, books, toys and even apples being swapped. Meath County Council kindly donated reusable cups, rice and pasta measures, pencils and rulers.

We also had information stands with leaflets on gardening and farming for pollinators, and recycling tips.

### ***Saturday 20 October 2018:***

Saturday began with a fascinating talk from **Terry Cassidy** from the Meath Branch of BirdWatch Ireland on creating habitats for birds. He spoke about the actions being taken in Trim, Co. Meath to protect swifts by installing swift boxes and lures to buildings. This could easily be rolled out around the country. He also spoke about the importance of water to birds as more and more fields and marshy areas are drained.

**Susan Andrews** spoke about grants to improve energy efficiency in the home. There was great interest in the scheme for photovoltaic solar panels, and insulation upgrades. Everyone was surprised at the level of grants available, and insulation upgrades can even be free to some homeowners. Susan went on to speak about grants to dairy farmers, and community grants.

**Enda Mullen** spoke about her research on badgers, where collars were placed on badgers and their movements were tracked. Badgers were shown to actively avoid fields with cattle and they also avoided farmyards. It is difficult to see how aerial TB transmission can take place when the badgers are keeping away from cattle. Occasionally badgers visited equine and disused farmyards. Enda spoke about the importance of disinfecting water drinkers – where TB can lie for up to two years.

Tea and cakes were then sold in aid of Maio National School by the parents' association.

**Kevin Collins** from the Department of Agriculture spoke to us about the NeighbourWood Scheme, where local communities plant a community woodland close to their village or town. He spoke about the health benefits of 'forest bathing' and how a walk in the forest is prescribed by doctors in Scandinavian countries. Kevin's enthusiasm was contagious, with lots of interest shown in creating something similar in Moynalty.

**Gordon Mackey** showed us some bees and read some poems on the importance of insects. He had many interesting gadgets to show us, including a bee keepers' suit, honeycombs, and a smoker.

**Alexis O Reilly** spoke to us about his work on rural isolation. He is working with Teagasc and Maynooth University on a PhD programme, looking at the TILDA health statistics on social isolation in farmers. There was huge interest from the audience in this subject, with a lively question and answer session.

Saturday's event was chaired by **John O'Brien**, who did a fabulous job of keeping us all in line. Thanks are also due to **Betty Smith** who organised the Steam Threshing Museum for us on both Friday and Saturday.

Meanwhile **Goska Wilkowska** from PATCH Network ran a children's wildlife workshop. The children examined skulls and really enjoyed pulling apart owl pellets to see what the owl had eaten!

Skyview4U ran a very successful planetarium, with amazing shows on trees and dinosaurs. The planetarium was magical, and the children really enjoyed it.

The SWAP SHOP continued with an entire room of the museum dedicated to swapping! At least 80 people turned up at this event.

### ***Sunday 21 October 2018:***

On Sunday we changed venue and moved to Golashane Nature Reserve where approximately 50 people came to hear **Brian Keeley** speak about the wildlife in this area, and the difficulties they face.

Everyone got together with **Colm Fitzgerald** to build bat boxes for Natterer's Bats, a crevice dwelling bat. This involved collecting stones and wood, and cementing them roughly into the boxes to create gaps. As Colm said: "Neatness is not allowed – you have to make the worst looking thing you have ever created!" These boxes will go up on the farm to be monitored and it is hoped that the gaps in the stone will be used for hibernation.

The evening ended with tea, baked potatoes and chatting about the talks.

Many thanks to all who attended, and to Suzanne's Coffee Shop in Moynalty, who made amazing jam which we presented to our speakers.

*All the talks were carried out by volunteers and Local Agenda 21  
Partnership funding from **Meath County Council** allowed us to make  
Moynalty Goes Wild free of charge to the public.*

**DONNA MULLEN, Director  
Green Foundation Ireland**

**24 October 2018**