



GREEN FOUNDATION IRELAND

Annual Report 2017

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

Although much of our time in 2017 was taken up with conducting administrative change to ensure that we now meet new higher regulative standards, Green Foundation Ireland was involved with three extremely successful events during the year.

Before we come to those events, we are delighted to report Green Foundation Ireland has received confirmation from the Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA) that our application for charitable status has now been approved by them. Our Registered Charity Number (RCN) is 2010 9042 and you can see our listing on the Charities Register [here](#).

We have also revamped our website to freshen it up and make it look more modern. This took some considerable time but, as you can see [here](#), the outcome was worth it.

As well as these, in July we also made a submission to the Citizens' Assembly on *How the State can make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change* specifically referring to a Constitutional Protection of the Environment, Agriculture, Resource Efficiency, Renewable Energy, Education, Transport and an Ombudsman for Future Generations. You can read our submission [here](#).

As mentioned above, we held three very successful events during 2017 – a conference (*Green Values, Religion and Secularism – Moving beyond the enlightenment division between science and religion*), a workshop (*Brexit and Progressive Politics*) and an education meeting (*A New Climate for Education*). You can find links to our reports, videos and photos of each event by clicking on the name of the event below.



1 JULY 2017 – Trinity Conference:
[Green Values, Religion and Secularism – Moving beyond the enlightenment division between science and religion](#)
Held in the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin
GFI Co-Ordinator: Nuala Ahern

The Conference opened with a welcome from **Andrew Pierce**, Head of Discipline at the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin, and from **Nuala Ahern** on behalf of GEF and GFI. There were questions after each presentation and a general discussion with the participants at the end of both morning and afternoon sessions.

The morning session was chaired by Geraldine Smyth, Adjunct Associate Professor at the Irish School of Ecumenics.

Erica Myers spoke of Novalis, the German romantic poet, who was openly criticism of the Enlightenment tendency to turn everything into an object, to use it for one's own profit: nature, history and other people. Novalis foresees that even the most autonomous modern citizens are in danger of becoming the object of rational processes over which they have lost control. His warning to the Enlightenment not to overrate the rational capacities of human beings and detach them from emotional and historical knowledge is still valuable today. If we were to green the Enlightenment what would that mean?

Andreas Weber gave his answer to that question when he spoke about how sentience, experience, subjectivity, corporeal embodiment and agency are, in effect, excluded from the Enlightenment view of the world. This is not a historical matter, but deep structural principles in modern culture that have a powerful effect in ordering how we perceive, think and act. It could be said that rational thinking is an ideology which focuses on dead matter. Its premises have no way of comprehending the reality of lived experience; our civilisation might have forgotten what it means to be alive. This is what we need to change if we are to transform our culture. In fact this is already happening in science, but it is not yet communicated visibly to people.

Cathriona Russell defended the Enlightenment as protective of individual liberty and equality, and suggested that religious and philosophical ideas of the good life and duty to others could form an environmental ethics which put community life at its heart, while integrating the values of equality and human rights.

John Feehan maintained that our beliefs, values and behaviour must be informed by reason, which is guided by the way of understanding that is the hallmark of modern science. However, although that mode of knowing is fundamental, it is insufficiently attentive to the universe of our experience, and a deeper and closer attention is indispensable if we are to articulate a more profound response.

Reason is not compromised by faith: there is indeed reciprocity between reason and faith, but it only comes into focus with a widening of the embrace of rationality on the part of reason. Faith also needs to embrace and fully incorporate the deeper appreciation of the creation and our new understanding of cosmogenesis and evolution.

The afternoon session was chaired by Andrew Pierce, Head of Discipline at the Irish School of Ecumenics.

Mary Condren discussed the fact that sacrifice has been a potent symbolism of nationalism in Ireland in the 20th century, and the death of hunger strikers during the 1980s, including the Westminster MP Bobby Sands, resonated deeply into Irish political life. Self sacrifice is also the prevailing ideology of Jihadism; an ideology of terror and sacrifice which threatens us all in unpredictable ways. It is therefore important to counter this ideology of sacrifice at many levels.

She juxtaposed a theology of sacrifice with that of mercy. While the former is ubiquitous in the monotheisms, a theology of mercy can also be found in them all. For example, the

Arabic terms for divine mercy, *ar-Rachim* and *ar-Rachman*, can be traced back to the word for womb. For their part, *ar-Rachim* and *ar-Rachman* are related to the Hebrew root *rhm*, which already designates divine and human mercy at the beginning of the Old Testament in the Bible. In this way, in all monotheistic traditions – perhaps in all religions – alternative doctrines and practices can be found that contradict the hegemonic doctrine of the independent, spiritual masculine. She gave examples from both Jewish-Christian and pre-Christian Irish tradition of symbols of mercy as a counterpoint to sacrifice.

Jacob Erickson began by talking of his upbringing on the American prairie and about how religious imagination wrestles with, grieves, and thinks about resilience, ecojustice, joy, and beauty in the on-going wake of climate change. He spoke of how Pope Francis in his encyclical letter *Laudato si'* reflects on anthropogenic/human-caused global warming, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, the dangers of unlimited consumerism, "a misguided anthropocentrism," economic growth.

Jacob said that we hear those litanies of devastation often these days; however there's something in the affective language of this letter that is different. The letter's laments are couched in the language of praise. Francis the Pope lures the reader in with the poetry of Francis the Saint.

What he is haunted by most in reading this letter is its connecting disparate realms of life; the encyclical's balance of tragedy and human sin alongside love, hopefulness, joy, and possibility. Despite the vast ecological devastations, the letter evokes the beauty of our ecological contexts in its descriptions, and its logic argues that learning to see beauty in the everyday is an intrinsic part of an ecological conversion to the earth, *Laudato si'* refuses to make the choice between human and ecological life a zero-sum game. Pope Francis writes that we must realise that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*.

The Conference concluded with an invitation to the participants and speakers to a reception.



29 OCTOBER 2017

Brexit Workshop:

Brexit: Populism and Progressive Politics

Held in Queen's University Belfast

GFI Co-Ordinator: John Barry

This one-day event was divided into four panels featuring speakers from a number of sectors, including academia, politics, think tanks and NGOs.

PANEL 1: Brexit and Progressive Politics

The first panel began with **Steven Agnew**, leader of the Green Party Northern Ireland. Discussing Brexit, he made the point that while the Green Party will fight for the rights of

people who aren't included (for example women, LGBTQ), it is less effective at including people "who are not as educated as us, people who have been victims of the policies of the right" i.e. many of the people who voted for Brexit. He asked "how do we let them tell their story, people who the working classes can connect to? Our big prejudice is education. We need to have these conversations in community centres as well as in Queen's University".

Ray Cunningham, Co-Ordinator of the Green House Think Tank, was the next speaker and he explained and challenged the idea of a "Green Brexit", as [proposed by Michael Gove](#), among others. He highlighted that the people who voted for Brexit were not particularly sympathetic to green or progressive ideals, citing [this YouGov survey](#) in February 2017. Ray pointed out that "these outcomes require a government willing to pursue them and an electorate ready to support them, this is wishful thinking. You can't push something through without a democratic mandate". He also drew our attention to two relevant books on the topic: [Ruling the Void](#) and [The Lure of Greatness](#). He concluded that there can only be a "progressive Brexit" with the break up of the UK into republics within the EU, arguing that "Britain is already breaking up through how Brexit is being handled", for example Teresa May's "very Southern English" cabinet.

The final speaker was **Stephen Nolan** of Trademark, who discussed the ideas of "radical municipalism" and "solidarity economy". Radical municipalism is about "dispersing power and building social power", for example the [Department of the Commons](#) in Naples, Barcelona en Comú and [Cooperation Jackson](#). Examples of the solidarity economy are the Mondragón co-operative, the [Red Belt](#) in Italy, where 50% of the workforce are in co-operatives, and the town of [Marinaleda](#) in Spain, which has 0% unemployment. Inspired by these examples, Stephen has supported the development of several workers' co-operatives in Belfast in the last few years, including the Belfast Cleaning Society in 2011, the Creative Workers' Co-Op, Farmegeddon Brewing, Lúnasa Cáife and That's Arts. Read more about them [here](#).

PANEL 2: Brexit and Sustainability in Northern Ireland, the UK and Europe

The second panel focused on the impact of Brexit and the environment. **Viviane Gravey**, a lecturer in European Politics at Queen's, suggested that Brexit creates challenges not only for environmental law in the UK but in the EU. She noted that, while the UK government has often opposed EU environmental law, it has been a key leader in particular areas such as agriculture and climate change, and it is unclear who will replace the UK in this role, for example the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) may become less green.

Nichola Hughes of Sustainable Northern Ireland spoke of the challenges related to waste, climate change and energy. On waste, she drew our attention to the EU's [circular economy package](#), warning that products incompatible with the package could be shipped to the UK and used there. On climate change, she noted that the UK government has recently adopted its fifth low carbon budget but, if the UK is not part of the Emissions Trading Scheme, how will the government be accountable?

She also noted that getting local authorities in Northern Ireland to act on climate change is difficult because, unlike in the Republic, there is no NI legislation to require them to do climate action plans. In relation to energy, Nichola observed that there is an element of the Tory Party that is pro-fracking and nuclear, but if renewable energy turns out to be "the better option financially" then it will be adopted.

James Orr of Friends of the Earth Northern Ireland focused on environmental issues around the border. For example, he noted that in the case of opposition to fracking in Fermanagh, industry played one side of the border off against the other. He suggested that "ecocide" is happening along the Irish border, citing the results of [this](#) project. His proposition was that we need to "rewild" the border, along the lines of the [African transfrontier rewilding project](#).

PANEL 3: Brexit, the Border and Futures for Ireland and Northern Ireland

The first speaker was **Katy Hayward**, a reader in Sociology in Queen's, who took us through the impact of the EU on the border. She explained that the EU has changed the border in a number of ways, such as the depoliticisation of cross border co-operation, common EU citizenship, the right to cross border work and education and research co-operation.

Claire Bailey, MLA for the Green Party NI, spoke of how, in the UK, the impact of Brexit on Ireland is not being considered, and Ireland is often seen as something separate. She added that "we have never made people feel comfortable with the multiple identities we can have in Northern Ireland", and explained that Brexit complicates this further.

The next speaker was **John Kyle**, Belfast City Councillor and member of the Progressive Unionist Party. He noted that Unionists are very divided on Brexit, even within their parties, and that "tribal divisions between nationalists and unionists are worse than they have been for a couple of decades". He argued that in Northern Ireland people view the EU institutions as remote and bureaucratic. He suggested that we need a North-South ministerial council, an active civic forum, a British-Irish council, a common travel area and to see the cultural rights of NI citizens protected.

Lastly, **David Phinnemore**, Professor of European Politics in Queen's, set out his ideas for "differentiated withdrawal" for Northern Ireland, whereby the terms of withdrawal and the future relationship with the EU could be different for NI. He suggested that there is precedence for treating part of a State differently, for example, Greenland, Svalbard. He observed that a language is beginning to emerge around "flexible and imaginative solutions" to reflect the unique situation of NI, and Teresa May also recently spoke of finding "special solutions" for NI.

PANEL 4: Roundtable discussion on Populism, Brexit and the European Green Movement

The first speaker in this session was **Dick Pels**, sociologist and freelance political writer from the Netherlands. Prior to this, he was Professor of Sociology at Brunel University in London and also Director of the Dutch Green research foundation. Dick discussed global politics in 2017, with an emphasis on Brexit and Trump, suggesting that what we are seeing is a clash between two types of democracy – populist (plebiscitary) and pluralist (liberal).

Lee McGowan, Professor of Politics in Queen's, looked at the rise of populism in Europe, drawing our attention to the reduced support for the major parties in the recent German elections. He noted that centre right parties, for example in Austria, are now starting to adopt the slogans and themes of the far right parties, "making political capital out of it". He asked "are we seeing a silent counter revolution – revenge against the establishment and left-wing elites?"

Sophie Long, a recent doctoral graduate in politics in Queen's, offered the following advice on how Greens can respond to populism:

- Deconstruct populist narratives because they don't offer any truth, for example they don't tell us how to deal with capitalism, automation, industrialisation.
- Reclaim reason and challenge anti-intellectualism.
- Look at feminist and gay responses to Brexit. The narratives of leavers are masculine and about control. [This](#) LSE blog on voter values tells us about gaps that Greens could be addressing.
- Be critical and vigilant about the idea of a white working class, for example one-third of Asian voters voted for Brexit.
- Offer alternatives, for example green values of co-operation, non-violence, evidence.
- Consider how women are impacted by all this – there is only one woman on the nine person Brexit negotiating team.

Finally, **Eamon Ryan**, TD and leader of the Irish Green Party, discussed Brexit and the rise of the right. To conclude, he had some inspiring words on how Greens can use Brexit as an opportunity to offer people an alternative to populism:

"If ecology is about connection and interconnection, we need to talk to the other side, we need to go out and talk to everyone. You have to engage in a way that's respectful. We can't completely cut off the right. In doing this we will be true to our original principles.

Grab the space by being decent, by talking to everyone, by working with everyone, not by trying to be the boss; start listening."



3 NOVEMBER 2017

Education Meeting:

A New Climate for Education

Held in The Teachers' Club, Dublin

GFI Co-ordinators:

Eileen McDermott and Duncan Stewart

Green Foundation Ireland, in collaboration with **Cultivate**, **ECO-UNESCO** and **Good Energies Alliance Ireland**, and with financial support from the **Environmental Pillar**, presented this meeting.

Duncan Stewart (Chair of Green Foundation Ireland) opened proceedings and emphasised that we are in a state of emergency and how as citizens we are not informed enough to act. In particular, Duncan noted our education system has a huge role to play in educating our youngest citizens for meeting the challenges they will face in the future. Even more than the public not listening or hearing the message, politicians are not mandated to change

situations – it is up to us as citizens. Duncan talked of the dramatic loss in bio-diversity in recent times. Currently, wildlife populations are at 60% of when he trained as an architect in 1970. By 2020 it is predicted that we will have less than one-third of all wildlife populations that we had on the planet in 1970.

In addition to the existential issue of climate change, where our carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere are now 45% above the highest they were in over 800,000 years and likewise with our total greenhouse gas emissions. This is a major catastrophe.

Davie Philip (Cultivate) who facilitated the event, spoke of how young people need to develop 'critical skills' including problem solving, empathy, a sense of place and the development of co-operative skills. As moderator he fostered a culture of achieving consensus and ensuring the day was productive and results-focused.

Breda Naughton (Department of Education and Skills) spoke of the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Strategy 2014-2020. Breda noted we need to provide relevant knowledge around the 'what, how and why' of ESD through creating 'clear values' and supporting informed and active citizens. "Environment must conspire and dovetail with social, economic and political agenda" – they must all work in tandem. She noted sustainable development is now beginning to pervade across the curriculum – there are so many issues around the topic, much of it relating to global citizenship and promoting global peace. On the day, Breda was due to attend another event focusing on the Irish language and she spoke of how, when there are so many curriculum concerns and time pressures, it is hard to find a priority focus for what is important.

Peadar Kirby (Professor Emeritus of International Politics and Public Policy at the University of Limerick) gave a very rousing talk on education as a zone of tension which has to be navigated. His key question: what is education for? He discussed the root word for different methods of education: 'Ducare' – to lead, a method wherein the role of teachers is to inform. 'E-ducare' – to draw out discussion from the class and push possibilities. This is more risky – we don't know where it will take us. Peadar noted the problem of institutionalisation of education – and the need to provoke subversion of the dominant paradigm. For centuries there was a religious paradigm and an alliance between church and state. The new paradigm, the 'techno-economic paradigm', serving powers of global capitalism, ends up undermining society and our ecological systems. There are few signs of greening society.

Peadar noted we need a 'New Climate for Education' – climate change has to be the most dominant of our concerns. We need education for what is the 'good life' in holistic terms. Most radical evocation of education by Pope Francis and *Laudato Si'* sees it as serving powers of global corporations and the need to resist the techno-economic paradigm. The encyclical talks of 'myths' of utilitarianism, individualism, unlimited economic progress and competition. Peadar noted: "Science tells us we are facing Armageddon – and it's not just science fiction! We need to radically change direction – there is no bigger challenge".

According to Peadar, education must always be 'subversive', bringing change from below and not imposing a restrictive status quo mind-set to just keep the show on the road. We must sow the seeds of new values and new practices, and inspire new 'imaginaries' with a

questioning spirit. All education must 'enchant'. There is now an urgent need to challenge students and change society.

Elaine Nevin (National Director of ECO-UNESCO) spoke about how ECO-UNESCO focuses on environmental education with students and teachers in second level schools and with youth organisations, encouraging behavioural change with an emphasis on 'eco-literacy'. Their programmes focus on developing knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, critical thinking and self-awareness. This includes the Young Environmentalists Awards.

Another major focus is on Transition Year students who utilise a lot of projects in their learning and development. They are running a 12-week Pilot Youth for Sustainability Leadership training programme in 2018. They have also developed ESD resources and guidelines for teachers and students, such as sustainability tool kits for use in class.

Michael John O'Mahony (An Taisce Green Schools Programme) discussed the Green Schools Programme. Such a programme is in more than 50 countries and came to Ireland in 1997. The focus is on global citizenship, taking a whole school basis from school principals to the school cleaner. The programme is a 7-stage approach and it is important not to try to put square pegs in round holes. The programme has to become an intrinsic ethos of the school, they can identify impact, legacy and continuing school travel patterns. Developing leaders' knowledge is most important in driving behavioural change, these attitudes can cascade and grow as a result. Focusing on good teachers is very important, as they are key agents in education.

From age 10 to 18 there is a downward trend in appeal to environmental issues, which is sad. Furthermore, females appear to be more engaged with environmental issues. Cultural landscape has a huge effect, level of national engagement with environmental issues close correlation with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – lower income countries are more concerned about climate change. Michael John noted that empathy and listening are very important.

He quoted Harry S. Truman: "It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit".

Derek Grant (Primary Education Officer at the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment – NCCA) noted there has been a redevelopment of the curriculum to promote ESD. There are six Curricular Areas which comprise 11 subjects. There are several aims to this.

The first is to foster an understanding of and concern for the interdependence of all humans and all living things. The second is to create a sense of responsibility to long-term care for the environment, cultivating humane and responsible attitudes and an appreciation of the world. The third is to develop a broad and balanced view of the environment. Lastly, this reform seeks to encourage an understanding of the positive and negative repercussions of human acts on the environment.

An example of this is Geography. Students are required to identify attractive or unattractive elements of the environment. They also develop an awareness of the importance of the earth's renewable and non-renewable resources. Physical education and well-being is also

seen as important across the curriculum. For more detail, see the NCCA website at <http://www.curriculumonline.ie>.

Ciaran Monahan (Leaving Certificate Examination Paper Analysis Results) looked at how Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied exam papers represent environmental and sustainability-related questions on the papers. Most assessed areas of course were Geography, Agricultural Science, Biology and Construction Studies. He found that, unfortunately, several questions simply used climate change problems to look for maths solutions, not looking for any real understanding of rationale for sustainability. He mentioned how many papers focus on actions rather than rationale, the 'how' and not the 'why'. He stressed that an understanding of both was important to make change feel not only achievable, but essential.

Benjamin Mallon (Postdoctoral Researcher at Dublin City University) works in the Centre for Civil Rights and Citizen Education at Dublin City University. Ben is looking at pedagogic options for ESD teaching – working from theory to practice. Dublin City University is one of ten member universities of the Global Consortium for Sustainability Outcomes (GCSO), a global network of universities dedicated to scaling sustainability solutions with like-minded partners around the world.

Part of this work includes Educating School Teachers and Faculty for Sustainability through Continuing Professional Development. This project recognises that the world can only become sustainable if people of all ages learn how to behave more sustainably. It helps teachers to master principles of sustainability and provides practical strategies to help students attain relevant competencies via the public education system, from kindergarten to adult learners. This project will adapt competencies-oriented models to offer workshops for primary to tertiary educators, ultimately resulting in generations of students with deeply rooted sustainability competencies.

He discussed how *Farid's Rickshaw Ride*, written by Rowan Oberman, is "an ideal storybook for teaching which straddles curricular areas and links the local to the global". He underlined the need to link Climate Science, Justice and Action with a focus on becoming global citizens and the need to ensure we adopt a responsibility versus a blame approach to the topic of climate change which can be a depressing topic. The topic can also be scary for children; we need to be aware of this and teach in a positive, constructive way. We need to be careful that we do not push responsibility for solutions onto young people and understand they did not cause the problem.

Young People's Perspectives: Hannah Fitzpatrick, Ruairí Moore, Aoibhínn Nevin-Ginnetty, Lily Ní Dhrisceoil – these senior cycle students expressed their views on the current lack of ESD in secondary schools. They were very articulate and want more focus on this topic in secondary schools. They accept that they are 'privileged' in their knowledge of ESD, as they attend ECO-UNESCO special studies courses and are involved in extra-curricular ESD activity outside of school.

Kate Minnock (Secondary School Teacher, North Wicklow Educate Together) spoke of her efforts and the sacrifices she made to bring sustainability into the curriculum in her classroom. Mainstream teaching does not allow enough time or resources to ESD and she feels sustainability needs to be a separate subject in schools, involving phenomenon-based

learning and critical analysis of topics. Kate stressed the need for teachers' voices to be heard in discussions of ESD in future.

Pat Brereton (Professor at the School of Communications in Dublin City University) spoke in general about his Environmental Communication research, from the representation of farmers' tension between being 'stewards' of the land versus 'despoilers'. As key agents in the Irish climate change debate, farmers have to be addressed and not just demonised. There is a broader need for engagement with stories around environmental issues which media can and do cover. While accepting the danger of ideological co-opting and reinforcing the dominant ideological agenda – and the dangers of greenwashing – nonetheless the media has a major role in developing a critical/ creative imaginary and putting the subject on public consciousness. Pat's new book, *Environmental Literacy: New Digital Audiences*, seeks to promote the need to develop more critical agendas, while engaging with all the new media affordances from Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, amongst others.

Keynote Listeners' Reflections

Kevin McCarthy (Department of Education and Skills) was very generous in his round-up of the proceedings and understood the need to develop a more reactive educational curriculum. He also noted the need to tap into both formal and informal education, as well as making discussions enjoyable for audiences in order to change hearts and minds, and therefore promote behavioural change. He mentioned a website specifically for ESD, with special areas on environmental issues: <http://www.scoilnet.ie>.

Aedín McLoughlin (Good Energies Alliance Ireland) spoke of how she worked, after being a teacher, on cross-border initiatives in the North of Ireland and then five years ago took up resistance to fracking and helped to get the practice banned in Ireland. Aedín noted education is key to change and we have to find ways of making it enchanting. She emphasised how to win the support of people and create a sense of urgency using new media. Schools are not separate from communities and sometimes schools should use their political clout to promote environmental issues.

Conclusion

There was an overwhelming interest expressed by all participants in continuing this dialogue. We in Green Foundation Ireland, along with our partners, look forward to pursuing this important discussion.

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 are looking forward to the challenges that the coming year will bring.

During 2017 we dedicated time and succeeded in meeting the new charity regulative standards, revamped our website and, in addition to hosting events, we embarked on a new project to co-ordinate the education system stakeholders to develop a new programme for environmental and sustainability education in Ireland. This is an ambitious project and it will be our main focus to progress this initiative during the year ahead.