



**GREEN FOUNDATION IRELAND
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ANNUAL REPORT ON ACTIVITIES

for the year ended

31 December 2020



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for the year ended 31 December 2020

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GENERAL OVERVIEW

for the year ended 31 December 2020

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

Compared to years past, 2020 has been a little... different. Luckily we now have access to Zoom and so were able to rise to the challenges presented to us by the COVID pandemic. As in 2019, we held five extremely successful events, all of which this year took place online. Consisting of three talks, a conversation and a webinar, these were:

- Building a Just Transition to a Zero-Carbon Economy.
- A Question of Scale (SCALE being the acronym for Supply Chains and Local Economies).
- The Fossil Fuel Divestment Movement.
- Biodiversity and Bees.
- Our Plastic Lives.

As always at our events, including those held on line, time was allowed to have discussion and interaction between the attendees and the panel of speakers at all of these events which will no doubt lead to important impacts for the wider community.

Details of all these events (including reports, videos and photographs where appropriate), as well as our events held in previous years, are available on the [Events Section of our website here](#).

The Education Sub-Committee of GFI was active during 2020 in progressing the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) project. This collaborative project with ECO-UNESCO and Good Energies Alliance Ireland has continued to develop inter-actions with the Department of Education and Science, National Parents Council Primary and Post-Primary, Educate Together, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

An Taisce has expressed an interest in working with GFI on the ESD project. Grant funding from the Environmental Pillar has been obtained for this project which is continuing in 2021.

Education is key to empowering young people to make a difference in their world and education is central to creating the changes needed for sustainable development to become a reality which has the potential to benefit all of society.

GFI intends to more fully utilise the *Eco Eye* series as a teaching and learning platform for ESD by indexing and in other ways making individual programmes more accessible in short bites.

GFI continues to communicate the already existing resources on the GFI website to a much wider audience of both committed green activists and the interested wider public.

These resources can also be used by educators as part of their curriculum subject development in second level and further education.



The GFI website is also available to all students and we plan to raise awareness of this at a national level. In addition, GFI is planning to make educational podcasts available on topics based on this information.

GFI will continue to work in collaboration with Ecoed4all, ECO-UNESCO, Secondary Teachers for Sustainability and various other stakeholders to promote ESD within the curriculum of all secondary schools.

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to each and every one of our Board and Management Team, as well as to all our supporters, 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.



BUILDING A JUST TRANSITION TO A ZERO-CARBON ECONOMY



16 SEPTEMBER 2020

Talk:

[Building a Just Transition](#)

Held Online by Zoom

GFI Co-Ordinator: Joan Campbell

Sinéad Mercier is a consultant on climate change law and policy with a special focus on just transition and human rights approaches. She is currently working with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and has previously worked for the National Economic and Social Council (NESC), the Green Party of Ireland and Philip Lee law firm. Her new book is *'Men Who Eat Ringforts'* written with Michael Holly and Eddie Lenihan, and published with Askeaton Public Arts (2020).

THEME

The theme of Sinéad's talk, which is entitled *"Building a Just Transition to a Zero-Carbon Economy"*, asks the questions 'what is a Just Transition?' and 'where are we heading?' and gives an overview of the origins of the principle of just transition in climate action, as well as outlining examples of best practice in Australia, Germany and Scotland.

Jane Grimson of the Bray Heads U3A Group welcomed everyone to the online talk, saying they were absolutely delighted to be co-hosting the event with Green Foundation Ireland.

THE KEY POINTS MADE BY SINÉAD

Sinéad began by giving an explanation of the meaning and origin of the phrases *'Climate Justice'* and a *'Just Transition'*.

The Paris Agreement in 2015 (or COP 21) declared the aim to keep any future increase in temperatures below 2° centigrade.

If we are to achieve the aims of the Paris Agreement, we must implement major changes in how we live our lives; change how we heat our homes; how we travel; our farming practices. We have to stop using fossil fuels (oil, gas and coal) in order to de-carbon our economy because carbon is fuelling the temperature rise.

The Paris Agreement acknowledged that the countries which will be most damaged by Climate Change are actually those that are least developed and have a very low carbon lifestyle, for example, many island communities across the globe.

Those of us with the most affluence, with extreme wealth or what Sinéad called *"tax-avoided wealth"*, are the people who live high carbon lifestyles but won't face the same challenges in any transition to a low carbon society.



A *Just Transition* to a low carbon economy aims to make sure that "no-one is left behind" in poverty because, for example:

- they have lost their job in a coal mine, or in Bord na Móna or some other carbon intensive industry;
- or
- they live in low-quality housing and cannot afford to heat their homes.

A Climate Justice focus rejects any argument that we have to have a Jobs v the Environment narrative.

The Paris Agreement refers to "human rights" and coalition building with workers' rights.

Climate Justice sees *"energy as a right or a public good not a commodity for wealthy and powerful countries"*.

When the ESB was privatised, jobs were lost and energy bills increased, yet everyone, rich and poor alike, pay a levy or flat charge to cover the cost of upgrading the grid.

Energy poverty is a major problem in Ireland. Both Irish Rural Link and MABS have done research on energy poverty.

Local Authority Adaptation Plans to address Climate Change should have a Climate Justice focus.

Case Studies

Sinéad referred to work she did for NESC about what is happening in other countries.

In the past, communities were often encouraged to move in order to work in peat and coal mines and they became essentially State-owned energy communities, totally dependent on a way of life and a cultural identity built up around the work they did.

It was International Labour Organisations that endeavoured to protect workers when mines ceased operating or governments decided to phase out reliance on coal – communities were *expected* to feel guilty about working in an industry that was damaging the environment.

Germany adopted a bottom-up and a strong social dialogue approach which was helped by a network of very strong local government. Germany viewed the workers as a resource with their own knowledge and skill sets that could be transferred to community-owned wind energy. Germany exercised strong state leadership.

Wales on the other hand adopted a top-down approach. Wales decided to rely on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and ended up with call-centres.

Melbourne in **Australia** is another example of the jobs in the mines being tied up with a way of life and cultural identity; the coal mines were privatised in the 1980s.

In 2014 there was a huge fire in a mine; the State came to the rescue; the lesson for environmentalists and any government managing a transition is not to go into such communities as activists but with humility and respect; with the aim to help; not to speak down to such communities but to them or with them. In Melbourne Government backed a local plan.



Scotland is regarded as a leader in *community owned energy* but still has high energy poverty.

There is a need to define what is meant by *community owned energy*.

The oil and gas industries in Scotland agree that much of the workers' knowledge and skills acquired in their industries are transferable away from fossil fuels into renewables but feel there is no Government commitment or Government Plan to support or encourage such transfer – for example, **Norway** has a State Pension Fund that invests in wind. Meanwhile the workers feel betrayed; they were encouraged to move from coal to oil and now they are being told to move again from oil to offshore wind.

In **Poland** there is an important cultural context for the reluctance to engage with a Just Transition to a fossil-free economy. There used to be a strong unionised labour force but the fall of the Berlin Wall led to privatisation, the fall of unions and the rise of oligarchs. Unions are now confined to coal mines and are aligned to right-wing politics.

Ireland needs a Climate Action Plan that is not market-based. However, it is difficult to discuss human rights in a market context. Language is important and we must see energy as a right.

More than once in her talk Sinéad mentioned *Community Owned Energy* needs to be defined. This connects nicely with the talk that GFI and the Bray Heads U3A Group hope to arrange on Micro-Grids, etc. It is easy to generate community energy; very difficult to keep ownership of it. A lively Q&A session followed, with a total of 44 people attending this first online event that Green Foundation Ireland was involved with.

IMPACTS

Education

Approximately 44 people attended the event, learning about building a "Just Transition".

Advocacy

The event gave an overview of the origins of the principle of just transition in climate action, as well as outlining examples of best practice in Australia, Germany and Scotland.



A QUESTION OF SCALE

"Imagining a Co-Operative, Community-Led Approach to Regional Resilience"
(SCALE being an acronym for Supply Chains and Local Economies)



22 SEPTEMBER 2020

Conversation:

[A Question of Scale](#)

Held Online by Zoom

GFI Co-Ordinator: Tommy Simpson

Our second event of 2020 was an online conversation entitled 'A Question of Scale' (SCALE being the acronym for Supply Chains and Local Economies) on the theme of imagining a co-operative, community-led approach to regional resilience. This was part of a transnational project by **Green European Foundation** (with Ireland, the Netherlands and the UK taking part) and, for the Irish element of this project, we joined with **Cultivate** to host this conversation.

Our speakers included **Stanka Becheva**, FOE Europe; **Dirk Holemans**, GEF; **Sinéad Mercier**; **Seán McCabe**, TASC; **Oliver Moore**, UCC / ARC2020; and **Liam McGinley**, Glencolmcille. All of our speakers gave us different perspectives and insights, as well as ideas, into the various aspects of our theme.

The event was introduced by **Tommy Simpson** of Green Foundation Ireland and **Jonathan Essex** of Green House Think Tank in the UK, and facilitated by **Davie Philip** of Cultivate / ECOLISE.eu.

'A Question of Scale' was a conversation in the context of global vulnerabilities and challenges – climate, pandemic, risks to supply chain, jobs, etc – and the thrust of this conversation examined the following:

- identify 'Blockers and Enablers' to a co-operative, community-led approach to regional resilience;
- secure local supply chains and strengthen regional economies;
- outline the benefits of regional economies (especially, but not limited to, the agri-food sector);
- encourage co-operative effort in local production for local need;
- identify the potential for livelihoods in our regions (with a focus on the midlands).

60 participants took part in this event and one of the outcomes was the production of a Position Paper [which you can read here](#).

IMPACTS

Education

Sixty people attended the event, learning about supply chains and local economies.

Advocacy

The importance of a co-operative, community-led approach to regional resilience was emphasised.

THE FOSSIL FUEL DIVESTMENT MOVEMENT "History, Successes and Lessons for Future Action"



Photo: Outside Leinster House by Sasko Lazarov
Photocall Ireland / Trócaire / 350.org

15 OCTOBER 2020

Talk:

[The Fossil Fuel Divestment Movement](#)

Held Online by Zoom

GFI Co-Ordinator: Joan Campbell

Louise Fitzgerald is a researcher and environmental justice campaigner. She has spent the last 7 years involved in various climate and environmental movements, including the Fossil Fuel Divestment Movement, as well as groups highlighting the environmental and justice impacts of fossil fuels, particularly natural gas. Last year she launched Scientists for Future Ireland in support of the student climate strikers. She recently completed a PhD at the School of Politics and International Relations in University College Dublin focused on how to develop socially just sustainable transitions.

THEME

In this talk, Louise gave an overview of the fossil fuel divestment movement, one of the most successful global environmental campaigns in recent decades. She shared her own personal experiences of being involved in the movement as an active member of the Berlin divestment group.

That campaign resulted in the Berlin parliament divesting its €750 million pension fund from fossil fuel companies and was one of the first big European divestment successes. Based on these experiences, Louise reflected on the broader successes of the movement, and what potential lessons we can draw from this in facilitating action on climate, ecological, and justice issues.

Jane Grimson of the Bray Heads U3A Group welcomed everyone to the online talk, saying they were absolutely delighted to be co-hosting an event with Green Foundation Ireland for the second time.

THE KEY POINTS MADE BY LOUISE

Louise started her talk with the reasons behind keeping fossil fuels in the ground. There are approximately 2,795 gigatons of carbon underground, stored in fossil fuels. This is 5 times the level of safe carbon (565 gigatons) which we can burn to keep our temperatures under 2° Celsius.

These fuels must not be extracted. Louise spoke about bringing her fossil free campaign to the public. *"If it is wrong to wreck the climate, then it is wrong to profit from that wreckage – we believe that religious institutions, governments and other organisations which serve the public should divest from fossil fuels"*. Many public organisations took this to heart, with religious and faith-based organisations divesting, pension funds divesting, etc.



Some organisations looked at their funds carefully. Health care workers looked at the heat stress and particulate matter emissions from fossil fuels and their effect on health and asked to divest from this industry. Universities prepare students for a successful future, which would be undermined by global warming. They also decided to divest.

Louise presented the financial arguments for divesting in fossil fuel industries. Four-fifths of oil and gas reserves can never be used if we are to keep temperatures under 2° Celsius. Therefore, they are stranded assets, and investors in these industries will find they are unable to gain financially from them.

Then Louise looked at campaigns, which usually have 3 waves:

- Wave 1** is often focused on universities, with students protesting;
- Wave 2** is when multilateral financial groups are divesting – for example, faith groups, etc – until a tipping point is reached;
- Wave 3** is when there are changes in market norms, and restrictive legislation – for example, the fracking ban in Ireland.

Louise spoke about the Fossil Free Berlin Project which she was involved in. Berlin held €750 million in a public pension fund, of which €10 million was in fossil fuels. In February 2015, Louise and her group held some flash mob activities on Global Divestment Day. They concentrated on public visual activities and asked the Mayor of Berlin to meet them.

When he refused, they ran an amazing campaign called "Where's the Mayor", where public figures (including the head of GLS the first sustainable bank in Germany, famous pop singers and politicians) asked the mayor to tea. They then took photos of the famous person sipping tea with an empty chair and a "Where's the Mayor?" sign.

Needless to say, such an amazing campaign went viral! In addition, they proved that the fossil fuel investments were losing money. Berlin is a city which has many poor areas and cannot afford to invest in an unprofitable fund.

18 months later, the Berlin regional government decided to divest and set up a new fund, which is clear of fossil fuels, child labour and nuclear.

Ireland was the first country to divest from fossil fuels. This was facilitated by a Private Members' Bill brought in by Thomas Pringle TD, with much support from Trócaire.

Louise emphasised the importance of bringing the public with us on campaigns, and she spoke about working to bring our intentions into being, rather than focussing solely on outcomes. She talked about the need to work with industry to bring a just transition and protect workers in carbon intensive industries.

Louise also spoke about infrastructure, and that if infrastructure (for example the Shannon LPG terminal) is built, you require 30-40 years of use to make it economically viable – so you are essentially locked into using fossil fuels for that period. She warned against the dangers of such infrastructure.

A lively and interesting Q&A session followed, with a total of 36 people attending the event.



This was an inspiring talk, and an exemplar on how to run a successful campaign. I will definitely be sending the link to this talk to my pension fund manager!

IMPACTS

Education

With 36 people attending, this event energised the audience with a captivating outline of the fossil fuel divestment movement.

Advocacy

The fossil fuel divestment movement is critical to achieving a reduction in global warming.

BIODIVERSITY AND BEES



12 NOVEMBER 2020

Talk:

[Biodiversity and Bees](#)

Held Online by Zoom

GFI Co-Ordinator: Martin Nolan

THEME

In order to promote biodiversity, it is essential to have a wide variety of pollinators. Insects are well adapted to this and the most effective pollinators are colonies of bees. Within this group, the various bumble bee species pollinate a wide variety of plants but their colonies are much smaller than colonies of honey bees. While honey bees are rightly thought of as providers of honey and wax, their more important role is as pollinators.

This event covered what trees, shrubs and plants are helpful to bees throughout the year for both pollination and honey and explained what the main state sponsored scheme, the National Apiculture Programme, is doing to identify stressors of bees and assist beekeepers in dealing with them.

ABOUT OUR SPEAKERS

Mary Montaut

Mary, who is the Editor of The Irish Beekeeper (An Beachaire), has been keeping bees in Bray, Co. Wicklow, for about twenty years and regards herself as an Eternal Beginner, because there is always so much to find out and understand about bees. Her interest in honey bees has gradually extended to include all sorts of pollinators, and she is on the Steering Committee of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, representing the Federation of Irish Beekeepers' Associations.

Julia Jones

Julia is an Assistant Professor at the School of Biology and Environmental Science in University College Dublin. Social insects, bees in particular, have been a fascination since her PhD at the University of Sydney in Australia, and drove her postdoctoral fellowship work on the interaction between environmental landscape, gut microbial community, and bee health and behaviour. This interest has also fuelled work on genomic selection for a suite of honey bee traits, including a focus on resistance to a major honey bee parasite.

Our talk on bees was moderated by GFI Director **Claire Downey**, while **Graham Hall** from the Federation of Irish Beekeepers' Association introduced our speakers.



The afternoon began with all of us watching a wonderfully informative video on bees by 9 year old **Rijin Lim** from Korea which told us amazing facts and figures on bees. Rijin is amazing herself, having spoken about her school project in the video as well as doing the artwork as part of home-schooling during the COVID-19 restrictions. Rijin went to school in the Ballinteer Educate Together National School in Dublin; however, after spending 4 and a half years in Ireland while her father was studying in Trinity, Rijin and her family are returning to Seoul next month.

Mary Montaut started by talking about the evolution of pollen – 125 million years ago it was spread by wind, and the first angiosperm was 100 million years ago. Pollen is an excellent source of protein, and insects started to diversify their diet and eat it. One early insect stuck in a piece of amber from Borneo has hairs on its legs – the first sign of pollen collection.

Mary went on to mention co-evolution, where a plant and animal evolve together for mutual benefit. However, if they become too dependent on each other, this can lead to problems. The honeybee possum has become dependent on a rare plant in western Australia. However when a new road was put through this area, the habitat became fragmented, and the possum could no longer cross to pollinate the plant. The dependency of the system was broken, and this may lead to the extinction of both plant and possum. A very close mutual relationship is risky.

Other plants which depend on insects include Epipactis, which is pollinated by a small wasp. The scent smells like the leaf is being eaten by an insect – the wasp comes in to eat the insect and is fooled into pollinating the plant.

Mary then talked about the fig wasp which lays its eggs inside the fig – the fig has no flowers, and the young wasps pollinate the figs.

Some plants like laurel have extrafloral nectar with stick buds. These attract ants to defend themselves from other insects.

Mary spoke about bumblebees which seem to be affected by climate change as they don't move area and adapt very well. Their range is diminishing.

She gave wonderful advice on what to do to help pollinators:

- Plant open flowers like daisy and bell flowers – open flowers allow access to the bees and late flowers allow them to overwinter.
- A tidy lawn is a desert and useless for pollinators. Let the dandelions and clover flower and cut the grass less often. Bumblebees don't go more than half a mile from its nest, so they need food nearby. Plants like oilseed rape are only in bloom for 2-3 weeks, and bees need food all year around.
- Every garden should have plants in flower all year round. Mary recommended a book by Margery Fish – "*A Flower for Every Day*". She suggested planting winter flowering shrubs such as Viburnum. At the moment bees are foraging on ivy. Daphne bholua is a wonderful plant for bees in winter. Flowering trees are fabulous, as are shrubs.
- However, flowering cherries are of no use to bees – single flowers are best like those found in the bird cherry.



- Her advice for flowerbeds was important – do not plant F1 hybrids which are sold as bedding plants. They have no pollen. Plants with spires like Lupins, Lavender, etc are excellent for bees. Flowers like Iceplant are excellent too, as are plain Fuchsia. Honeybees have short tongues so can't get into deep flowers. Sometimes the bumblebees bite into the back of flowers to get the nectar.

Mary showed us photos of pollinating flowers, with bees on salvia, bee orchids and campanula. The bee orchid looks like a bee and tricks a bee into mating with it, and then drops its pollen on its back. Mary recommended a book called "*The Intelligence of Flowers*" by Maurice Maeterlinck, which is now back in print, for lots of interesting stories on pollination.

She also spoke about the problems of seeds being coated with neonicotinoids. Many bulbs have also been soaked in this – and it is very detrimental to bees.

Finally, Mary mentioned the importance of weeds – easy to grow and good for pollinators !

Graham next introduced **Julia Jones**, an assistant professor in UCD, who works on the National Apiculture Programme.

Julia is working on a two-year programme called *Better Bees in Ireland*. This programme assists beekeepers and helps in transferring knowledge, looks at combating bee invaders and diseases, and collects information on colony losses by looking at pathogens, determining pesticide and agricultural levels and investigating adaptations to climate change.

Julia told us of a national survey which she is carrying out, where beekeepers are asked to sample bees, brood, pollen, and honey. She is looking for beekeepers to participate in this programme.

She worked in Australia discovering which bees do each task in the honeybee colony, and what influences the behaviour – is it a mix of age, genotype, and environment? To look at the mechanisms of the underlying division of labour, Julia kept bees in greenhouses to study them. This allowed her to regulate temperature and humidity. Brood temperature needs to be from 33-32° Celsius, and Julia wanted to see how bees achieve this temperature.

She looked at the bees fanning behaviour, where they shake their wings to thermoregulate the hives. She genotyped individuals and exposed both genetically diverse and non-diverse colonies to different temperatures and looked at their behaviours. She also looked at Asian honeybees in Thailand.

Julia found that different bees had different temperature thresholds for performing fanning behaviours, and that genetic diversity was very important for a stable brood nest temperature.

Julia is also interested in finding out if gut microbial/bacteria influences health in bees. Julia worked with the University of Surrey to investigate this. The sociability of honeybees allows for the transfer of gut microbes and bacteria within hives. She put hives in a variety of different landscapes (including some oilseed rape fields with neonicotinoids) and she age-matched colonies. Her analysis showed that there is a difference in the abundance of gut bacteria between different landscape types, and between foraging and indoor bees. This may influence the behaviour of the bees.



53 people attended these two fascinating talks on the intricacies of such small creatures and the wonderful news is that we can help them by simply doing nothing and letting our garden go wild !

IMPACTS

Education

Fifty-three people attended this very interesting and insightful webinar and the Q&A discussion was indicative of the great interest in the role of our pollinators.



OUR PLASTIC LIVES



25 NOVEMBER 2020

Webinar:

[Our Plastic Lives](#)

Held Online by Zoom

GFI Co-Ordinator: Claire Downey

Our Plastic Lives was held as part of the European Week for Waste Reduction (EWWR) which encourages all Europeans to carry out awareness-raising actions about sustainable resources and waste management during a single week in November. In 2020 this week ran from 21 to 29 November. You can find out more about EWWR at www.ewwr.eu



THEME

In this webinar we explored where plastics come from, how they end up in our lives and what we can do to use plastic wisely and prevent plastic waste.

ABOUT OUR SPEAKERS

Féidhlim Harty: *Féidhlim is director of FH Wetland Systems environmental consultancy in Ennis, Co. Clare specialising in constructed wetland, reed bed and zero discharge willow facility systems. He is the author of Get Rid of Your Bin and a new ebook just out from Permanent Publications called Septic Tank Options and Alternatives – Your Guide to Conventional, Natural and Eco-Friendly Methods and Technologies.*

Abigail O'Callaghan Platt: *Abigail joined VOICE as the Lead on the EPA funded No Home For Plastic project. She has a background in research on sustainability themes, completing a masters in Environmental Economics and Policy at Imperial College London before working as Principal Investigator on research projects with Trinity College Dublin and the Clean Technology Centre Cork. She lives in Cork and can occasionally be seen strutting the stage.*

Garry Fitzpatrick: *Garry is Lead Project Co-Ordinator at Refill Ireland, which is a campaign to reduce plastic bottle waste by encouraging people to bring their own water bottles and refill on the go instead of buying bottled water. By finding and mapping public water fountains and also encouraging as many businesses as possible to sign up to the Refill campaign – to offer quibble-free tap water refills – Refill Ireland is building a movement to address the growing problem of single-use plastic.*

Claire Downey: *Claire, who is a Director of Green Foundation Ireland, is Executive with Community Reuse Network Ireland (CRNI), an all-Ireland umbrella body funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that represents community based organisations involved in reuse and recycling. In this role she is responsible for the promotion of reuse, support for members to overcome barriers to reuse, communication and policy input, networking and research.*



Our webinar was moderated by GFI Director **Claire Downey**, while **Nuala Ahern**, our former Chair, welcomed everyone by talking about how widespread the plastic problem had become. She then went on to introduce our first speaker.

Féidhlim Harty spoke about the taxpayer funding of the fossil fuel industry and how it leads to plastic waste. We tend not to look at the source of plastic, which is generally from fracked gas. There is heavy investment in petrochemicals and plastic – 200 billion dollars – with a projected growth of 40 per cent in the next 10 years. Plastic accounts for 14 per cent of fossil fuel consumption, with only 10 per cent of plastics being recycled.

The fossil fuel lobbyists have spent 250 million lobbying EU politicians in the last 10 years, and the EU Green Deal has been greatly influenced by corporate interests.

The Keep America Beautiful Campaign was introduced by the plastic industry – putting the onus on the people who litter or dump, while lobbying for increased plastic usage.

The plastic industry is privatising its profits while socialising its costs – local communities must clean up. And the Irish taxpayer funds the fossil fuel industry too.

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) ties in limits to protection of the environment in order to protect company profits. The Corporate Europe Observatory has asked the EU to end lobbying by the fossil fuel industry, and also to stop politicians from working in fossil fuel industries after their time spent as a politician. Féidhlim said there is 'leapfrogging' in jobs between industry and politicians, so the regulators and the regulated are very close. The Corporate Europe Observatory also campaigns to stop subsidies to fossil fuel industries.

What about the polluter pays principle? Perhaps we need to pay for cleaning the micro-plastics from our washed clothing.

And what about recycling? We are recycling more, but also consuming more plastic waste. Féidhlim showed us a graph which demonstrated the amount of plastic being incinerated. We need to stop the supply.

So what can we do?

- We can live more frugally, buy in farmers markets and zero waste shops.
- We can support groups such as Stop Climate Chaos and Keep it in the Ground.
- We can lobby and campaign.
- We can buy in second-hand shops.
- We can hold a vision of a more equitable, interconnected biodiverse world.
- We can no longer accept the status quo.

Claire next ran a poll about our own use of plastics within the last week. The first question asked participants which single use items they had used in the past week. The most common response (40%) used was plastic wrapped snack (for example, crisps, biscuits, yogurt pot, etc), followed by disposable Coffee Cup (14%) then soft drinks bottles, water bottles and sandwich wrap (all 6%). 25% had not used any of the options given.



The second question for participants was about which types of masks they used. 76% of those on the call used reusable masks, while 21% used a mix of reusable and disposable masks and only 3% used disposable masks.

Abigail O'Callaghan Platt introduced herself by telling us that she is a project manager with VOICE and runs the No Home for Plastic research project. This aims to raise awareness to prompt behaviour change and gather data on plastic use in the home and classroom.

As part of the project she conducted both a household and a schools programme. Each house undertook a plastic use audit, and changes were suggested. The household could then take plastic pledges.

Under the primary and secondary school programme, the students learned about plastics, organised a lunchbox audit, and followed this up by writing an action plan – and they also looked at plastic in their homes.

As well as this, secondary school students looked at supermarket plastics and conducted audits of their homes.

Out of 39 households, 16 took pledges to reduce plastics. Looking at the household survey results, it was discovered that:

- 48% of households use coffee capsules.
- 56% of households use cotton buds with plastic stems.
- 88% of households use liquid hand soap.

These statistics can easily be changed for the better. The study also examined the use of plastic 'on the go' – only 12% hadn't used plastic packaging in the previous week while outside.

63% of household participants were surprised by their plastic use. The study really increased awareness of the plastic usage within our lives.

Abigail went on to mention that VOICE looked at barriers to stopping plastic usage in households. There was a lack of plastic free options in supermarkets. Small towns do not have access to zero waste shops, and it may not suit people's lifestyles to shop in small shops and plastic free shops. Also, it is often cheaper to buy plastic wrapped options, such as vegetables, when special offers are pre-packaged.

As stated above, after the audit 16 households in the study took Plastic Pledges, vowing to reduce their plastic usage. Some households stopped drinking bottled water, while others decided to try using disposable nappies. School students took on an action plan to reduce plastic usage in lunchboxes. Some insisted on reusable bottles, and others moved to wooden knives and forks.

There are a lot of easily avoidable plastics. The auditing tool was very successful, and Abigail indicated that VOICE will develop it more.

Our next speaker was **Garry Fitzpatrick** who is the lead project co-ordinator for Refill Ireland. He spoke to us about Refill Ireland, which is a not-for-profit social enterprise. He started with the shocking fact that 2.5 million plastic bottles are generated in Ireland every day.



Refill Ireland advocates for the instillation and restoration of public drinking fountains. They have created a Tap Map App, which shows where you can find a public tap or a tap provided by local businesses.

Garry continued by mentioning that Refill Ireland also provides community refill hubs and, in order to pay for this, they run zero waste events. They provide reusable cups at events such as marathons, races, etc. This also reduces CO₂ levels. They are currently working on a cup delivery system.

They also sell reusable bottles, which can have a school or business logo on it. Garry then stated that ideally public taps should be placed in parks, libraries, community halls, etc. The Tap Map App can be downloaded at Refill Ireland. And we each must ask our Local Councillors for taps in our areas.

Claire Downey then shared several resources to help with our actions and urged us to bypass black Friday by shopping, if we had to, in charity shops.

Resources

- cni.ie/directory
- cni.ie/reuse-toolkits-communities/
- cni.ie/videos
- cni.ie/events
- epa.ie/waste/nwpp/
data & research
- mywaste.ie/
- cni.ie/publications
- [Reducing Plastic Waste videos playlist](#)
- <https://www.storyofplastic.org/>
- repairmystuff.ie
- jimini.ie/collections/borrows
- [Carbon measure - reutilizayevitaco2.aeress.org/en](http://reutilizayevitaco2.aeress.org/en)
- www.greenfoundationireland.ie

With almost 50 people attending, there were lively Q&A sessions after each speaker as well as at the end.

The talks on plastics were wonderful and informative. I will immediately audit my house, and I'm sure I will be shocked at the results!

IMPACTS

Education

This very well attended webinar indicates the concerns of everyone over the proliferation of plastic in our daily lives and the challenges we face to halt and reduce the use of plastic.