

Environment Watch

NÍAMH NÍ DHUILL
TRANSITION KERRY

Inspiring turnout from Kerry for reality check on climate change

OVER 120 people came from all over Kerry and beyond to participate in Transition Kerry's (TK) community climate action conference last Saturday. It was a reality check in relation to climate change but inspiring to see how many people are either already involved or want to get involved and take action in their own lives and communities.

The conference highlighted how the key themes of food, transport, energy, waste, water, local economy and agriculture are central to tackling the enormous challenges of climate change and humans' contribution to it. As John Gibbons said we are the 'smash and grab generation' and our actions will leave our children and grandchildren without food, biodiversity and other vital resources. We were strongly reminded that everything is connected and were heartened to see and hear that many people and organisations are making changes at a personal and community level.

We had very relevant, though sobering talks and presentations, from the speakers in the morning: Dr. Margaret Desmond (Environmental Research Institute, UCC), Journalist John Gibbons (Think or Swim?) and Dr. Cara Augustenborg (UCD and Friends of the Earth). We heard from Professor John Sweeney (IPCC Climatologist) who gave an update on the current UN Climate talks in Bonn; Rob Hopkins, (founder of the Transition Towns Initiative in Kinsale 12 years ago and now with Transition Network UK); and of course, the recent Citizens' Assembly on 'how the state can make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change' and we will expand on this in future articles.

In the afternoon, we heard from local 'champions' about their transition stories. These included Barry Clarke (Kerry Sustainable Energy Cooperative), Niamh Ní Dhúill (Community Resilience course and the community orchard project), Thomas O'Connor (TK food group), Ian McGrig (GOF/Kerry Earth Education Project), Caitriona Fallon (the greening of Siamsa Tíre), Darach Ó Murchú (Plas Free Dingle/Transition Corca Dhuibhne) and Martin Lynn (Maharees Heritage and Conservation Association). We will give summaries of all of their talks in the near future in this column.

Local artist Lisa Fingleton's graphics captured the day in a most creative and inspiring way. Rena Blake's photos helped to record the event, while Keith Ó Faoileáin made sure all the technical aspects ran smoothly! The panel discussion and facilitation of the afternoon café conversation was by Davie Philips of the Eco Village Cloughjordan and Cultivate.

The success of the day was due to so many: our funders and supporters, The EPA, Kerry County Council, Kerry Sustainable Energy Co-op, XD Consultants, Creative Energy Solutions, Siamsa Tíre, Cultivate, Kerry PPN and Non Hardy Tree Forestry, volunteers, table facilitators, staff at NEWKD, Dingle, the hotel staff at Manor West Hotel and everyone who came on the day from all corners of the Kingdom - from Tuosist, Kenmare, Valentia, Cahirciveen, Killarney, Rathmore, Dingle, Camp, The Maharees, Ballyheigue, Ballybunion, Listowel, Tralee and more!

Now we need to get the message out to our local communities, local politicians and councillors that we all want a need to take action now to protect our local environment and to plan for a real sustainable future in Kerry, with resilient communities that are working together.

Transition Kerry has received funding through Kerry County Council under the Community Support Fund to run four more 'Building Community Resilience' courses in the county and we plan to start running these from early next January. If your community is interested in taking part, please contact Niamh at info@transitionkerry.org or 0867247066. If you want to be kept up to date, please sign up to our newsletter on our website: www.transitionkerry.org and find us on Facebook.