

LIMERICK

European Green Leaf Award Winner 2020



INTERIM REPORT | MAY 2020



Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae **Luimnígh**
Limerick City
& County Council

DECEMBER 2019

UNVEILING OF EGLA PLAQUE

Limerick's celebration of its year as a European Green Leaf City began with the unveiling of the European Green Leaf Plaque on the wall of the Council's Corporate Headquarters in Merchant's Quay on 9th December 2019.

The plaque was unveiled by Mayor Michael Sheahan, who expressed his pride in the fact that Limerick had been chosen as a green ambassador, but also highlighted the challenges associated

with moving towards a more sustainable future.

The plaque was placed in a small green space beside the main entrance. The idea behind choosing this location was that, over the course of the EGLA year, this area would be transformed into a haven for urban biodiversity and provide an exemplar of what could be done in a small urban space to welcome wildlife in.



Mayor Michael Sheehan and Members of the European Green Leaf Team at the Plaque Unveiling

The area already had some interesting "weeds" growing in it: native ivy had made several attempts over the years to colonise the walls, but had been cut back repeatedly. This year however, the decision was made to welcome the ivy in and let it naturally create a green wall. Ivy is a hugely beneficial plant for pollinators and birds and, by letting it grow in this location, surrounding the European Green Leaf Award plaque, the Council hopes to highlight its importance and the benefit of green walls generally.

JANUARY 2020

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS AND WEBSITE

On January 23rd 2020, the EGLA programme was published and officially launched in Limerick.

The programme was printed on recycled stock with all marketing materials used at the launch event made from recycled bottles. Printed copies were distributed across Limerick city with a digital guide promoted across Limerick City and County Council's social media channels.

Link to published guide : <https://www.limerick.ie/sites/default/files/media/documents/2020-01/limerick-european-green-leaf-award-2020-event-guide.pdf>

Social media assets/gifs were also created to enhance the marketing of planned events.

A dedicated website [Limerick.ie/european-green-leaf-city](http://limerick.ie/european-green-leaf-city) hosted on

Limerick's official digital platform, Limerick.ie, also went live on the same day.

The website, created in-house, explained what the EGLA was all about, gave information on the events programme along with a download link to the brochure and also provided interesting facts and figures and news items about Limerick's year. Being hosted on Limerick.ie has many advantages, particularly helping from an Search Engine Optimisation perspective and benefitting from digital campaigns that are run on the site throughout the year. It is also helpful for visitors attending any EGLA events to find out, in the one place, information on what to eat/see/do while in Limerick.



Mayor Michael Sheahan Speaking at the Official Launch of the EGLA year

OFFICIAL LAUNCH EVENT

The official launch of the Limerick European Green Leaf year was held on Thursday 23rd January in Istabraq Hall, which the Council's event space in its corporate headquarters at Merchant's Quay, Limerick. The event was held in the early evening to facilitate attendance by the widest possible cross section of the community, including school children. Over 100 people attended representing a broad range of sectors including business, community, education and environmental.

Attendees were treated to "Let's Think About Consumption": an exhibition of

artwork on environmental themes by various Limerick schools, colleges and individual artists, along with traditional music provided by a local group of very talented young musicians.

Speakers on the night included Mayor Michael Sheahan and Minister Patrick O'Donovan who formally launched Limerick's year.

Following the speeches, an informal reception was held to allow those present to further enjoy the music, art and refreshments and also to network with others interested in sustainability issues.

"THINK ABOUT CONSUMPTION" ENVIRONMENTAL ART EXHIBITION



Secondary School Student's Examining the Let's Think About Consumption Exhibition

Over 500 people including 100 trainee teachers from Mary Immaculate College received a guided tour of the European Green Leaf "Think About Consumption" Exhibition in Istabraq Hall, Merchant's Quay in January and February.

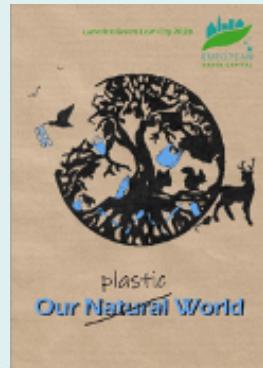
"Think About Consumption" challenges

us to think about what we consume, bring us beyond the idea of 'reduce, reuse and recycle', to a more conscious prevention of waste in the first place. The various elements of the exhibition and the contributors are described below:

LIMERICK COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION - EUROPEAN GREEN LEAF AWARD POSTERS

Lecturer Audrey Fitzgerald, School of Creative Media & Visual Arts asked fourth year arts students to illustrate a poster representing Limerick City's success in winning the European

Green Leaf Award 2020. The students produced a series of beautiful posters on different environmental themes, several of these were used to illustrate the EGLA programme of events.



Posters on the EGLA themes by Limerick College of Further Education Art Students

CATHERINE MC AULEY SCHOOL - 3D WHALE ART

Catherine McAuley School has demonstrated a serious commitment to the environment over many years. This artwork was created by students as

part of their Green Schools work on the Marine Litter theme. It highlights the problems humans have created for sea creatures



3D Whale Highlighting Problem of Rubbish in the Ocean

DANCE FOR THE OCEANS VIDEO

This wonderfully creative initiative sees the Dance Academy Limerick create and choreograph a wonderful piece to help address the two and a half million plastic water bottles that are generated

in Ireland every day, with people buying single-use bottles of water on-the-go, as opposed to carrying a refillable container. Tackling plastic waste is just one hurdle in tackling climate change.

DROWNING IN PLASTIC – JACKIE MC GRATH

This installation challenges people to question why we continue to destroy our planet, when we know better? With her work Jackie has created responses to climate change and the plastic pollution in our oceans and on our beaches. The pieces on display in Istabraq Hall were made from plastic that was collected from beaches in west Clare. Her art highlights the fact that we are the first generation that really understands what plastic is doing to our planet and we are the last generation that can ignore what

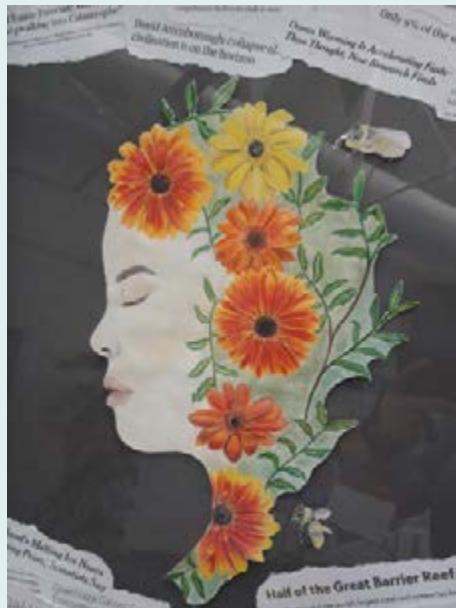
is happening as future generations are left with the havoc that we caused by not taking responsibility. Jackie collaborated with 13-year-old Saoirse Exton, from the Limerick activism group called Fridays for Future Ireland, as she considered it is the youth of today that is fundamental in making society aware that by reducing the use of single use plastics in their daily lives they are helping to save our planet. Today's youth are tomorrow's keepers of our planet.



Youth Climate Activist Saoirse Exton examines the Drowning in Plastic Art Installation

BALANCE IN NATURE, MIXED MEDIA - CAOILFHINN GEARY

With this piece the artist aims to highlight the negative ecological and social impacts of the climate change crisis, which we all face. She set out to contrast nature's beauty with the damage we are choosing to do to it. "I've read many articles surrounding this topic and chose the article headlines that impacted me most for the images' background." The central flowers drawn with coloured pencil represent Mother Nature and the watercolour face represents myself trying to find balance within the two worlds.



Art work contrasting nature's beauty with the damage we are choosing to do to it

CONSUMPTION: CONSIDERING RESOURCES & WASTE - INGRID HESS, GRAPHIC ARTIST AND LECTURER

The exhibition "Consumption: Considering Resources & Waste" encourages the viewer to consider their relationship to consumption by reflecting on how they use the following resources: water, air, trees, earth, and plastic. The work has been shown at

The Linda Shea Gallery in Haverhill, Massachusetts and Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. Ingrid kindly donated a copy of her work for environment awareness purposes to Limerick City and County Council.



Attendees at the EGLA launch examining Ingrid Hess' Pieces

THINK- LIMERICK COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION

This exhibit challenges us to 'THINK' and take action on single-use disposable items. Asking us to think about

recycling and the need to move towards multi-use items rather than continue our throw-away culture.



Youth Climate Activist Saoirse Exton examines the Drowning in Plastic Art Installation

FEBRUARY 2020

TIDY TOWNS SEMINAR



EGLA team member, Sinead McDonnell, Guest Speaker Mary Keenan and Deputy Mayor Adam Teskey at the Tidy Town's Seminar

"Tidy Towns" is a network of volunteer community groups who aspire towards making their local towns, villages and city areas more attractive and livable. They are one of the most active, empowered and effective volunteering networks in Ireland. Every year, they compete in a national competition where their efforts are scored under a range of headings and each group works long and hard to improve their scores year on year.

In recent times, the competition is more and more focused on sustainability and, through this, local groups have become more aware and engaged with issues such as biodiversity, waste management and climate change. Tidy Towns groups are seen as a key group in delivering environmentally positive change at local, grass roots level. Therefore, as part of Limerick's European Green Leaf celebrations Limerick City and County Council

hosted a free Tidy Towns seminar on Tuesday 11 February 2020. The aim of the seminar was to support groups with their ongoing work and to raise awareness of the actions they could take in relation to the environmental themes within the competition.

Over 80 Tidy Towns volunteers from across Limerick were treated to an excellent presentation by guest speaker, Tidy Towns Adjudicator Mary Keenan. Mary has a degree in Horticulture and a lecturer is in the Botanic Gardens. She has worked in the Parks and Landscape Department of South Dublin County Council and has been both President and Director of the Tree Council of Ireland. There was also a presentation on the European Green Leaf project which highlighted how we can all help in contributing to a greener and more eco-friendly and sustainable Limerick.

LET'S TALK ABOUT CLIMATE ACTION WORKSHOP

There was full attendance at this workshop with participants from Tidy Towns and other voluntary groups, 3rd Level colleges, the local business community, Limerick Clare Energy Agency and Limerick City and County Council. Participants were given an overview of the science of climate change, an explanation of the terminology used along with the need to work together across all

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/17vBVPySTtQOh7SeCZEZqVQZjv2Ys3kIyixFoqJtALr8/edit#gid=1209528264>

In addition participants were introduced to the EU Horizon 2020 project – Positive City Exchange. Limerick is Ireland's first lighthouse city and one of only two EU 'lighthouse' cities that have been selected for a major climate change pilot programme that will be a role model to the rest of Europe on how to dramatically reduce the carbon footprint of urban areas. The main elements of the project include:

1. Positive Energy Block – established in one of Limericks city blocks
2. Building renovation programme for some heritage buildings
3. City based, community scale renewable energy generation
4. Electric mobility as a Service
5. City – community electricity grid
6. Citizen Energy Champions
7. Local Energy Company for community trading.

sectors to find solutions. There was also a workshop element where the participants worked together in groups to determine possible measures for both climate action and mitigation. These measures were divided into immediate(NOW) Short-term (SOON) and long term (LATER) measures. These measures are outlined on the google document link below.

The EU [+CityxChange](#) Programme (Positive City Exchange) sees Limerick, along with Trondheim in Norway, chosen to roll out a project that has the potential to revolutionise how we produce and use energy in European cities and towns. Workshop participants were introduced to this city centre project with a view to further citizen engagement in the future. A link to the Limerick project page is given; <https://www.limerick.ie/CityxChange>

ENERGY SOLUTIONS INTERACTIVE DISPLAY

Over 100 people visited the Energy & Environmental Awareness Hub in Merchant's Quay. It included information on Self-Assessment Energy Audits, a Pacman Energy Game along with practical examples of energy

efficient lighting, insulation etc. Along with an Energy Quiz with a €50 winner's prize, SEAI brochures and information on how to secure Energy Reduction Grants. The display was very well received.



Impact Energy Efficiency Information Hub at LCCC Office Merchant's Quay

MARCH 2020

LIMERICK ST PATRICK'S DAY PARADE

Limerick's St. Patrick's Day Parade is one of the biggest in the country, with thousands of participants from at home and further afield. In celebration of Limerick's year as European Green Leaf City, it was planned that the theme of the 2020 parade would be "Our Future is Green", with the emphasis on highlighting environmental issues. Unfortunately, on the 9th March 2020 the decision was taken by LCCC management to defer the 2020 St Patrick's Day Festival due the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, while it was necessary to cancel the parade, a significant amount of preparatory work had taken place, which it is hoped will feed into the 2021 parade. In keeping with the theme of "Our Future is Green", potential participants in the parade were asked to be ambassadors for Limerick European Green Leaf Year. Specifically, in designing their contributions, they were asked to:

- explore the concept of a greener future in imaginative and engaging ways and to attempt to remind people that our climate is a very fragile thing, and to celebrate Limerick's designation as a European Green Leaf City for 2020.
- embrace the parade theme when preparing their entry and to be as creative and imaginative as possible in interpreting the theme Our Future Is Green, through costumes, floats and performance. Entries could be created by using green alternatives and/ or recycled materials where possible
- tell us what their Green Action for 2020 is. This was due to be announced by the local radio presenter who was to be master of ceremonies on the day.

To emphasize the environmental focus, youth climate activist, Saoirse Exton, and Tidy Towns and Team Limerick Clean-Up champion Helen O'Donnell were both named as Grand Marshals.

Gaia, an art installation, by Luke Jerram was due to arrive in St. Mary's Cathedral for the duration of the St Patrick's Festival from 15 - 22 March. This would allow visitors to see how planet Earth looks from space and reflect on ways we can protect our ecosystem for future generations. This new touring artwork aimed to bring together a fusion of NASA imagery and atmospheric surround sound floating beneath the cathedral's 12th century arches.

In addition, participants were also asked to consider greener alternative modes of transport when arranging to get to and from the parade: this could include car-pooling, cycling, walking or taking public transport and Limerick City and County Council introduced a paperless registration process for this year's entry.

Tens of thousands of spectators were expected to be thrilled by colourful and high energy entries as they made their way down O'Connell Street from Roden Street, all the way down to Rutland Street, on 17 March from 12 noon, a distance of approximately 1.5km.

While the cancellation of this parade was a big disappointment, we believe that the engagement around environment themes which took place with both participants and the public in the lead up to the event did help to raise awareness of these vital issues.

<https://www.limerick.ie/discover/eat-see-do/festivals/limerick-st-patricks-festival/news/2020-festival-is-greener-than-usual>

<https://www.limerick.ie/discover/eat-see-do/festivals/limerick-st-patricks-festival/news/parades-beamed-across-america>

<https://www.limerick.ie/discover/whats-on/kids-family-fun/limerick-st-patricks-day-parade>

DON'T MOW LET IT GROW

The simplest thing that can be done for the natural environment is often nothing! As part of our commitment to the All Ireland Pollinator Plan and in celebration of our European Green Leaf Year, Limerick City and County Council urged the public to "Let it Bee". We identified a number of road verges around the city where grass and wildflowers would be left uncut until the Autumn in order to provide food for wild bees and other pollinators. In

September, these areas will be cut down and the cuttings removed. This will reduce the nutrient levels in the soil thus encouraging wildflowers to naturally colonise the areas.

This campaign was launched at the end of March with a press release and social media campaign. Signage was erected to inform the public, reassure them that we weren't just being lazy and encourage them to do the same.



Let it Bee sign in place at Childers Road, where the verge will be left uncut until Autumn

WHAT'S THE BUZZ

Limerick city and county council were delighted to support the completion and publication of this wonderful e learning module on the identification and recording of Irish Bumblebees, through the EGLA programme.

The module was developed by local zoologist and bee expert Liz Gabbett in consultation with the National Biodiversity Data Centre. However, due

to a lack of funding, the module had never been completed and published. Through the EGLA programme, LCCC provided the funding which allowed this great resource to be made available to the public. It is now hosted on the National Biodiversity Data Centre's website and available also through Limerick.ie

<https://www.limerick.ie/council/services/environment/all-ireland-pollinator-plan/whats-buzz>

<https://www.biodiversityireland.ie/identifying-irish-bumblebees/lesson.html>

IMPACT OF COVID 19

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, it has been necessary to defer many of the events we had planned for our EGLA year. This includes our flagship event “Ireland’s Buzzing- International Conference on Pollinator Conservation”. However, most events have now been rescheduled at least provisionally. Our pollinator conference will take place on 19th and 20th May 2021, once again to coincide with World Bee Day. All registered delegates were offered a choice of a refund or to carry their booking forward and the vast majority chose to carry forward, demonstrating the level of enthusiasm there is for this event.

We were unable to plant our biodiversity garden near the plaque in March because of the restrictions on non essential work. However, it will be planted in October instead and should be well established by summer 2021.

The sustainable travel event planned for May will be held in the Autumn, provided restrictions have been lifted sufficiently.

The conference on river restoration is now planned for March 2021 to coincide with World Water Day and we are proposing an even more ambitious programme than originally envisaged.

While it is hoped that these events will be possible in the originally planned format, we are looking at alternative methods of delivery of other events. For example, we are working with the Vincent Wildlife Trust to develop a virtual Bat Walk to replace the one planned for European Green Week. Our tours of corbally meadow will also be replaced with a virtual tour led by the aforementioned bee expert, Liz Gabbett.

In recognition of the current appetite for on line resources which exists due to the covid 19 restrictions, we intend to deliver a series of monthly webinars on environmental topics, starting from June. These will include a presentation on the Limerick Urban Co-op, which is a community based sustainable food and wellness initiative

<https://www.theurbanco-op.ie/>

and also a presentation on Gardening for Biodiversity based on this booklet <https://laois.ie/gardening-for-biodiversity/> which will be given by Juanita Browne of the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

We are currently finalizing our revised programme of events, which will be issued shortly.



Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae **Luimnigh**

Limerick City
& County Council