

Developing The Educational Potential Of Clare's Museum And Heritage Centre Sector

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(Pictured L-R) Frances Connole, Burren Centre; Tomás Mac Conmara, Clare Heritage Office; Tim Forde, Lahinch Seaworld and Clare Heritage Circle; Susi Matjeka, Vandeleur Walled Gardens and Clare Heritage Circle; and Cllr. Pat Hayes, Chair of the Clare Heritage Circle, at the launch of the Clare Heritage Collections Education Strategy at the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Centre.

A strategy for maximising the educational potential of County Clare's museum and heritage centre sector was launched at the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Centre today.

The Heritage Section of Clare County Council, which has led the development of the 'Clare Heritage Collections Education Strategy', hopes the collaborative efforts of the sector will increase public access to and awareness of Clare's rich heritage.

According to Tomás Mac Conmara, Clare Heritage Section, *'The initiative, which formed part of the Clare Heritage Plan implementation, establishes the educational potential of Clare's heritage collections and illustrates how interaction and co-ordination between various educational enthusiasts can ensure an advanced educational programme that will benefit the entire county.'*

'A level of co-ordination is required that sees educational stakeholders co-operating with heritage and museum providers in order to inculcate an enduring respect for our heritage and culture. The production of this strategy provides strong recommendations as to how we can utilise our heritage centre and museum collections to implement actions that result in a sustained interest and appreciation of our heritage', explained Mr. Mac Conmara.



(Pictured L-R) Katherine Webster, Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience; Danny McCarthy, Ború Cultural Enterprises; Cllr. Pat Hayes, Chair of the Clare Heritage Circle; Congella McGuire, Clare Heritage Officer, at the launch of the Clare Heritage Collections Education Strategy at the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Centre.

Ború Cultural Enterprises, a consultancy with significant experience in the museum sector, carried out the study. Schoolteachers from across Clare were given the opportunity to provide input on the strategy during a series of workshops that also featured presentations by the Clare Heritage section and members of the Clare Heritage Circle.

The process also involved widespread consultation and market analysis, which helped the formulation of a common policy for an outreach and education strategy for the Clare Heritage Circle and other relevant stakeholders. The document comprehensively outlines an operational programme for the implementation of the various recommendations.

These include, the development of handling collections/travelling exhibitions, collection care training, the combined digitisation of Clare Collections and the creation of a post for a heritage education officer to facilitate the interaction and implementation of the strategy.

Commenting on the new initiative, Bernadette Kinsella, Director of Services, Clare County Council, stated, *'The adopting of collaborative approach by the county's museums and heritage centres is key to introducing new audiences to the collections. Engaging with the community is a new area of importance involving outreach programmes, touring exhibitions, talks, teacher training courses and practical workshops. This enables audiences countrywide to find out about the county's rich and vast heritage.'*

Katherine Webster, Director of the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience, stated, *'Our education programme at the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience is developing all the time. We were pleased to be involved, as a member of the Clare Heritage Circle, in both providing input into the Clare Heritage Collections Education Strategy and tapping into the completed output as a resource.'*

'In addition to working with schools we have also seen the importance of life long learning with active retired groups also taking part in educational content. Learning about our heritage in a fun environment is something that all age groups enjoy', added Ms. Webster.

The 'Clare Heritage Collections Education Strategy' has benefited from the co-operation of the Clare Heritage Circle and Clare Education Centre, while the Heritage Council has financially supported it.