

CLARE SEEKS APPOINTMENT OF IRELAND'S FIRST HERITAGE EDUCATION OFFICER

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The appointment of Ireland's first county heritage education officer is being explored by the Clare Heritage Office in a blueprint for the strategic management of local museum and heritage centre collections.

Under the 'Clare Collections, Co-operate to Educate Initiative, 2007', which is being funded by the Heritage Council and Clare County Council, the Clare Heritage Office aims to create a heritage strategy that will relate exclusively to county Clare and broadly inform educational initiatives in the county.

As part of the project the strategy will examine the appointment of a Clare heritage education officer to co-ordinate educational initiatives in the county, as well as the establishment of a Clare based Irish Heritage Academy that will draw international students to the county to be immersed in Clare culture and heritage.

According to Tomás Mac Conmara, Acting Heritage Officer, Clare County Council, *"The initiative, which forms part of the Clare Heritage Plan implementation for 2007, will establish the educational potential of Clare collections and will illustrate how interaction and co-ordination between various educational enthusiasts can ensure an advanced educational programme that will benefit all concerned."*

He added that the Clare Heritage Office has for years encouraged co-operation within the heritage and educational fields.

"In order to ensure that children grow up with a lasting respect for their heritage and culture, a level of co-ordination is required that sees educational stakeholders co-operating with heritage and museum providers. This strategic approach will provide strong recommendations as to how we can capitalize on this evident ethos in the county and allow us to implement actions that result in a sustained interest and appreciation of our heritage", continued Mr. Mac Conmara.

Schoolteachers from across Clare were given the opportunity to provide input on the strategy during a series of workshops held in May. The workshops also featured presentations by the Clare Heritage Office and members of the Clare Heritage Circle.

Commenting on the strategy, Kyran Kennedy of the Clare Education Centre explained, *"The consultation undertaken by the Clare Heritage Office reflects the serious way in which they are approaching this initiative and there is no doubt that it will be of tremendous benefit to education in the county."*

The Clare Heritage Office, meanwhile, has appointed Ború Cultural Enterprises as consultants for the project. The Clare-based consultancy service specialises in

historical planning and exhibition development. Its Managing Director, Daniel McCarthy said the strategy will help devise an effective mechanism for utilizing the collections in the county for educational benefit in national and secondary schools as well as youth groups and visiting groups.

"The strategy will also encourage a cooperative 'care to share' ethos in the museum sector in the county leading to temporary exchange, handling and travelling exhibitions", added Mr. McCarthy.

Sample projects to be undertaken include the exploration of art history reflected in the Hiberno/Romanesque remains in areas like East Clare and Dysert O'Dea or 19th century agricultural artifacts and their variations throughout the county. Others would include a comparative study of the Bodyke and Vandeleur evictions of 1887 and 1888 respectively through the collections housed by East Clare Heritage in Tuamgraney and the Vandeleur Walled Garden in Kilrush.

The Clare Heritage Office will work with the Clare Education Centre as well as the Clare Heritage Circle (CHC) on the initiative. The CHC formed in 2003 under the Clare Heritage Plan 2003-2007 with the intention of coordinating the efforts of individual museums in County Clare. The group allows development in areas such as education, collection management, communication and the promotion of all aspects of County Clare's heritage.

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