

How it all started

The festival began as a pilot project in 2004, organised by a working group from the Cork City Learning Forum which had been set up by the Cork City Development Board (CDB) two years earlier. It was part of the CDB's strategy to make Cork a City of Learning.

The first festival ran for four days with 65 events and was such a success it was decided to continue.

Over the last 10 years it has expanded to embrace learning of all kinds, for all ages, abilities and interests. Learning organisations and individuals of all kinds participate, and over the years many have increased the number of events they offer.

During the tenth festival there were just under 500 events of all kinds – among them taster sessions, workshops, performances, tours, talks.

The festival's motto is

Investigate – Participate – Celebrate!

Its aims are:

- to celebrate those already participating in learning of all kinds;
- to raise awareness of the huge range of options there are all over the city for others to get involved.

It costs nothing except time and enthusiasm to get involved and all festival events are free.



Festival Patron is the Right Honourable Lord Mayor of Cork.

Thanks

Thanks to all our sponsors, without whose support the 10th festival could not have taken place.

Cork City Council, Cork Education and Training Board, Cork Institute of Technology, Ballyphehane Credit Union, National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD), Higher Education Authority (HEA) – Access Office, Blacknight Solutions, Ernst & Young, The River Lee Hotel.

City Councillors: Brian Bermingham, Catherine Clancy, Henry Cremin, John Buttimer, Mick Finn, Tony Fitzgerald, John Kelleher, Lorraine Kingston, Mary Shields, for contributing from their Ward Funds.

Co-Operation Ireland and its Cork branch & Cork City Council for supporting our partnership with Féile an Phobail & other cross-border projects.

Media sponsors: The Evening Echo & 96fm

Thanks also to Frameworks Films Ltd who document each festival.



Limerick's fourth Lifelong Learning

The fourth Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival is on the same week as the Cork Festival - Monday April 7 to Sunday April 13 2014.



Our goal is to offer the people of Limerick fun and interesting opportunities to get involved in new and exciting learning experiences. It doesn't matter what stage of life you are at, you can learn something new at the festival.

In 2013 the festival was organised by the Limerick City of Learning Steering

Group in collaboration with Limerick Communications Office, Limerick County Council, County Limerick VEC, West Limerick Resources and Ballyhoura Development Ltd. It featured over 150 events and activities – all free; we also had a large showcase event in Thomond Park in a 'Learner Market' style.

Our newly expanded 'Limerick Learning Region Steering Group' (including Limerick County) will oversee our fourth festival. The link with Cork Lifelong Learning Festival has been a great help.

For more information see: www.limerick.ie/limeicklifelonglearningfestival

- by Yvonne Lane, Festival Co-ordinator

Organising Committee 2013

Chair: William McAuliffe, National Association of Principals and Deputies (NAPD)

Denis Barrett, Community Education Facilitator, Cork Education & Training Board

Peggy Barrett, Executive Librarian, Cork City Council

Sandra Brett, Traveller Literacy Scheme

Deirdre Creedon, CIT Access Officer

Brendan Goggin, Former Registrar, CIT

Con O'Donnell, Cork City Development Board

Patricia O'Hare, Irish Primary Principals' Network

Ann O'Sullivan, Former CEO, Cork City Partnership

Mary O'Sullivan, Mature Student Officer, UCC

Marcela Whelan, Development Worker, Cork City Learning Forum

Tina Neylon, Festival Co-Ordinator

Next Festival

The 11th Cork Lifelong Learning Festival takes place from Monday April 7 to Sunday April 13 and the closing date for event details is Monday February 10.

Email learningfestival@corkcity.ie for a form or call Tina Neylon on 492 4527 or 086 603 5552

Newsletter text: Tina Neylon



FESTIVAL CELEBRATES TEN YEARS

Back in 2004 when the first festival took place, there was almost full employment, and those who emigrated did so from choice. But even then some sections of our society were left out – many had poor literacy skills, had dropped out of school early or left education without any qualifications. In prosperous times there was plenty of work for them, mainly in the construction and service industries. Sadly, that's no longer true.

Since it started, the festival has targeted those areas of Cork with the greatest concentrations of people without qualifications, particularly through the Community Education Networks, which are supported by the Cork Education and Training Board (formerly the VEC).

The festival is inclusive – bringing together all ages, encouraging the participation of people with differing levels of ability, interests, backgrounds, ethnic origin, and involving providers from both public and private sectors. There are no fees charged to organisations and individuals running events – and admission to all festival events is free.

While demonstrating that learning can be fun, the festival has a serious underlying intent – an attempt to change attitudes towards education, and not only among those disaffected perhaps due to unhappy early experiences, but also across the general population.

Over its ten years, the festival has become a model for other cities in Ireland and could well become one for cities anywhere. Limerick organised its third festival in 2013 and Waterford its second.

There is evidence that attitudes to education are changing. The most obvious is how the role of Community Education Networks in festival week has evolved. From organising one joint event, the networks have expanded their participation; often individual members run their own events as well as getting together to organise a collective event. During the first festival the networks organised 25% of the 60+ events, and they have maintained a similar percentage while the festival has grown to almost 500 events.



We have seen a culture of celebrating learning developing in Cork, particularly in some of the most disadvantaged communities. One good example is how five years ago Home School Community Liaison teachers, members of four Community Education Networks on the northside got together to organise a Family Literacy project. One Book, One Community has been repeated annually since then. Copies of the book chosen each year are distributed free to children to take home to read with their family. Activities associated with the book are organised by the teachers and take place during the festival with parents and other adults from each community encouraged to get involved in them, and they do.

The festival encourages people from all backgrounds, cultures, abilities, to be involved. It has played a role in breaking down barriers between different groups – no more so than through its partnership since 2010 with Féile an Phobail (the Festival of the People) in West Belfast. Cross-community and cross-border projects in boat-building and rowing with Meitheal Mara and mural painting with Belfast artists have helped build relationships which are developing beyond the two festivals.

Since 2004 the festival has been building up the profile of Cork locally, nationally and internationally as a city where learning is celebrated.

We're very proud of our first 10 years.

www.corkcity.ie/learningfestival
 email: learningfestival@corkcity.ie



FESTIVAL DEBATE

The festival debate, held in CityNorth College of Further Education/Terence McSwiney Community College, was part of a national consultation & planning process. Its title was: Education & Training: In the Midst of Change will there be Equality of Access?

In Ireland Education & Training is going through a time of rapid change, with the setting up of SOLAS to replace FÁS, and 16 new Education & Training Boards taking the place of 33 Vocational Education Committees (VECs).

The debate was very well attended and lively, with many questions asked by audience members.

It was chaired by Ted Owens, CEO City of Cork, VEC, with speakers: Kathleen Lynch, Professor of Equality Studies, UCD; Mary Liz Trant, Director, Equality of Access office, Higher Education Authority; and Brian Lister, OBE, from Scotland, who brought an international dimension to the discussion.

Before the Debate, Professor Kathleen Lynch launched the Cork City Community Education Forum document – **Our Priorities for the Next Five Years**. The Forum is made up of representatives of all 10 Community Education Networks in the city, and the document represents the views of over 100 local providers. For details contact Liz O'Halloran, Forum Chair at 021 450 8562.



SCRIBES

For the second time, the festival organised its own Scribes - an event inspired by its partner Féile an Phobail.

The evening in An Spalpin Fanach on South Main Street was chaired by Seamus Hoosey, recently retired Senior Producer at RTÉ Radio One, and featured four writers, two from the North: Tony Macaulay and Danny Morrison, joined by Cónal Creedon and Jamie O'Connell from Cork.

National Seminar on Traveller Horse Ownership

The seminar took place at City Hall on March 21 - the UN Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Its aim was to highlight positive examples of horse ownership across the country in order to support initiatives which can influence the living environments of horses in urban settings, whilst acknowledging the cultural context of Travellers. It was organised by the Traveller Visibility Group (TGV) with others, including Cork City Council & the HSE, and local and national Traveller organisations.

Over 100 attended. It was chaired by Niall Crowley, former CEO Equality Authority, with speakers from UCC, TVG, Pavée Point, Gypsy Council UK, Tralee Traveller

Horse Project, Kilkenny County Council and Irish Horse Welfare Trust.

After presentations, the participants attended workshops and made recommendations, among them, to:

- set up a national Traveller horse ownership group to advance proposals made at the seminar;
- open channels of communication with local authorities to disseminate good practice & to explore the possibility of preparing guidance on local authority responses to Traveller horse ownership;
- develop links with the mainstream horse industry to seek solidarity with Traveller horse ownership;
- convene a second seminar to review progress made after the first.

Anyone interested in the report can contact **Ciara Ridge at 021 450 3786**.



Launch of Paddy the Traveller Boy, a book for children

Written by the Spring Lane Traveller Women's group and illustrated & compiled by Christina Dervin & Grace Donaghue, this delightful book was launched during the festival. Its publication was supported by Cork Traveller Women's Network, the HSE, St Vincent de Paul & City of Cork VEC.



WHY THE FESTIVAL IS INVOLVED IN ECCOWELL



Delegates at the EcCoWell event in September heard from Minister Seán Sherlock; Professor Mike Osborne, Glasgow University & Co-director of PIE (Learning Cities); Professor Michael Parkinson, Director, European Institute for Urban Affairs, Liverpool John Moores University (Economically Sustainable Cities); José Ignacio Arriba, City Council, Vitoria Gasteiz, Basque Region, Spain - European Green Capital 2012 (Green Cities); Joan Devlin, WHO Secretariat, Belfast (Healthy Cities)

EcCoWell is about moving beyond boundaries and encouraging people to work across sectors for the betterment of all. Like the festival, it's about inclusion.

EcCoWell has been developed by Peter Kearns of PASCAL International Exchanges (PIE). PASCAL emerged from work done on lifelong learning by the OECD. The festival is a PIE member.

EcCoWell is about integrating strategies across the areas of ecology, economy (Ec), community, culture (Co), well-being, lifelong learning (Well).

It's not about spending more money – it's about being more efficient, by building on areas of common interest.

A group of volunteers was set up to develop the concept: Deirdre Creedon, Denis Barrett and Tina Neylon of the festival committee joined by Denise Cahill (HSE Healthy Cities), Bernie Connolly (Cork Environmental Forum) and Elmarie McCarthy of Strategic Planning and Economic Development at Cork City Council.

We invited Peter to introduce EcCoWell to Cork during the 2013 festival. He and his wife Denise travelled to Cork at their own expense and the River Lee Hotel kindly sponsored their stay.

Over 80 attended the seminar Cities of the Future in Triskel Christchurch, where they heard from the Lord Mayor, Peter, and took part in group discussions.

The seminar built up interest in EcCoWell: Cities for the Future: learning from the global to the local, one of Cork City's Flagship Gathering events. It took place on September 26 at City Hall, with site visits and cultural activities on September 27.

It was an opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences with over 250 people from overseas and from all over Ireland, north and south.

See: www.eccowellcork.com the website hosted by Blacknight Solutions as part of its sponsorship of the festival.

RAISING THE PROFILE OF CORK INTERNATIONALLY

Deputy Lord Mayor of Cork, Cllr Lorraine Kingston and Tina, as guests of UNESCO, were invited to contribute to its first International Conference on Learning Cities in Beijing, China (October 21-23). The conference was co-organised by UNESCO, the Ministry of Education, China and the Government of Beijing Municipal City. More than 550 delegates attended, representing 160 countries, with Cllr Kingston and Tina the only people from Ireland.

With a delegate from Finland, Tina represented Europe on the Drafting Committee for the Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities and the Key Features of Learning Cities. Both documents were adopted at the conference's conclusion.

Cork's Deputy Lord Mayor represented all the Lord Mayors present as vice-chair at the Closing Ceremony. Cllr Kingston spoke about the festival's role in establishing Cork as a Learning City and its recent involvement in

EcCoWell, and also reflected on what she had learned during the conference.

'Cities Learning Together' conference in Hong Kong



- by Denis Barrett Community Education Facilitator, Cork ETB & member Festival Organising Committee

"Cork is a leading light of learning cities internationally"; "Cork is the first EcCoWell city in the world so far" - remarks made by Mike Osborne and Peter Kearns, co-directors of PASCAL International Exchanges, at its conference in Hong Kong in November, with over 60 representatives of cities worldwide.

Cork's Lifelong Learning Festival and EcCoWell initiatives were much admired and we were invited to speak

at the conference following our successful events in 2013 and the submission of a paper by Tina Neylon and myself entitled Why Cork's Lifelong Learning Festival is committed to EcCoWell.

Cork's ability to bring together such a wide range of representatives for the EcCoWell conference was widely commented on and the question of **'Why Cork?'** was the subject of a number of presentations and panel discussions over four days in Hong Kong.

The consensus was the unique role played by the continued growth of the lifelong learning festival, with the resulting support across sectors and communities, contributing to the development of a **'culture of learning'** in Cork.

The network of festival partners was in a strong position to join with the networks attached to the successful Healthy Cities initiative, Cork Environmental Forum, with City Council's

Economic and Strategic Development Directorate helping us to connect with business networks. So we have started to work **'beyond the silos'** and to add value to each other's efforts with the overall goal of the improvement of the quality of life of all citizens.

Building on the central role that Cork was asked to play in the UNESCO Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities, the city is now well regarded among learning cities and regions globally. Cork needs to build on this success by taking the next steps in the strategic development of this world class **'city of learning'** identity.

Other cities and regions represented in Hong Kong were keen to learn from and collaborate with Cork over the next number of years. This can only be good for our attractiveness as a city to live in, to study in, to travel to and to work in and with over the next decades.