



The INTO Congress and 13th International Conference of National Trusts was held in Ireland from 13th – 17th September 2009, hosted by An Taisce The National Trust for Ireland (ATNTI).

This was the first gathering of the National Trust movement since the establishment of INTO in December 2007 and had as its theme “Heritage of the World in Trust: Conservation in a Changing Climate,” around which plenary presentations, working sessions and site visits revolved.

Delegates attending the conference signed a declaration, entitled the ‘Dublin Declaration’, which sent a clear message to world leaders and those attending Copenhagen to prioritise heritage protection in strategies on climate change. The Declaration specifically calls on world leaders to reach agreement in Copenhagen on greenhouse gas reductions (limiting global average temperature rise to less than two degrees Celsius); to agree to promote policy frameworks at national and international levels that encourage investment in low carbon technologies; and to support measure which protect heritage sites, both in the natural and built environment.

Simon Molesworth, the INTO Chairman, said that national trusts share the responsibility of maintaining our global heritage for future generations: “National trusts can set the standards for sustainable property custodianship, ensuring we have a neutral carbon footprint: we can be responsible exemplars in a world facing great change. How we respond to this new world order will vary from country to country as climate change manifests itself in differing ways around the globe.

“This conference is an opportunity for national trusts to learn from each other about enhancing their work and promotion of heritage. In the UK, the National Trust owns, operates and protects hundreds of heritage sites, and is responsible for ensuring that so many UK citizens get actively involved in their protection, including maintaining pathways on important walk-ways and keeping coastlines litter-free. Meanwhile, heritage groups from Uganda, Ethiopia and Taiwan are growing tourism around local heritage and the principles of sustainability. Here in Ireland, An Taisce has given children and teachers the tools to reduce their carbon footprint – all the while saving thousands of euro each year – through the Green Schools programme. This is a shining example of something which could be replicated in other countries.”

Delivering a keynote address on the opening day, was 16-year old transition year student, Eamonn Hayes from Ballina, Co. Tipperary. He told delegates that the actions of adults were critical in determining the type of world that will be left behind for his generation. “It is obvious to me that many adults pay no attention to preserving our natural resources and the environment.

It is because of this that I have agreed to share my experience and concerns with those attending the International Conference of National Trusts. I hope that those who hear my

speech – including people like the Minister for the Environment and Local Government, John Gormley, and former President, Mary Robinson – can spread the message that the world is not just for this generation.

“Melting ice-caps, spreading deserts and flooding may seem like far-away problems, but if we don’t take action now, they will be a reality for every citizen of this world in generations to come. Do you want your legacy to be a damaged world that you pass onto my generation, and the generation after me?”

Also addressing the opening session were: Mary Robinson, Director of Realising Rights, who delivered a paper on the impact of climate change on human rights; Richard Moe, President of the US National Trust for Historic Preservation, who spoke about conserving and improving our existing built resources to combat climate change, and Dame Fiona Reynolds, Director General of the National Trust for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, who presented a paper on how the current economic climate offers challenges and opportunities for the heritage movement.

The conference was officially opened by the Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government, John Gormley TD. It was funded with the support of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Getty Foundation.