

Learning about bats, Vikings, Bronze Age horns and much more

Heritage in Schools Scheme new website launched

Tuesday, 12th September: A new website aimed at increasing participation in the Heritage in Schools Scheme has been launched today by The Heritage Council.

The new website (<http://www.heritageinschools.ie/>) allows schools to find a local Heritage Expert and book a school visit, as well as access a range of classroom resources which teach children how to build a giant nest, create a butterfly garden or make their own family tree, for example.

The Heritage in Schools Scheme is the Heritage Council's primary school heritage education initiative which facilitates visits to primary schools nationwide by a range of Experts on Ireland's natural, cultural and built heritage. Launched in 2000, it now facilitates more than 2,000 visits per year by a panel of 145 Heritage Experts. The primary aim of the Scheme is to encourage awareness of the natural and cultural world that surrounds Irish school children in their daily lives and engage them in a direct experience of this heritage. The Scheme encourages place-based and hands-on learning in the outdoor classroom whilst supporting the stated aims and objectives of the Social, Scientific and Environmental Education (SESE) curriculum.

The Expert's areas of expertise range from bats to whales, from Vikings to the history of bread and from story-telling to traditional music, song and dance, to mention just a few. Through the Scheme, the children develop a knowledge and appreciation for the uniqueness of their locality through trips to local parks, woods, lakes, rivers, sea-shores, old graveyards, castles or churches or other places of interest through structured field trips with a Heritage Expert.

Launching the new website **Heritage Council Chairman Michael Parsons** said that the Heritage in Schools Scheme is a very important part of the Council's work to encourage access to heritage for primary school children. He said that: *"Through this Scheme, we are aiming to encourage awareness of the genius of the natural and cultural world that surrounds us and engage children in a direct experience of their heritage. The Scheme also allows children to develop knowledge of and appreciation for the uniqueness of the place where they live"*.

"The Council is very grateful to the panel of Heritage Experts and participating schools who work so hard to bring heritage to life for young people", added Mr. Parsons.

The Scheme is open to all primary schools nationwide. Schools are encouraged to visit the website (www.heritageinschools.ie) for more information.

ENDS

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Note to editors

The Heritage Council is the statutory body charged with identifying, protecting, preserving and enhancing Ireland's national heritage. National heritage includes Monuments, Archaeological objects, Heritage objects, Architectural heritage, Flora, Fauna, Wildlife habitats, Landscapes, Seascapes, Wrecks, Geology, Heritage gardens and parks, and Inland waterways.

Established under the Heritage Act 1995, and operating under the aegis of the Department of Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the Heritage Council provides advice to the Minister, and partners and networks with Local Authorities and a wide range of other organisations and individuals to promote Ireland's heritage.