

Dundrum Climate Vigil – Celebrating a year of climate action

On April 26th, the Dundrum Climate Vigil group celebrated one year of climate action since its first vigil took place on Main Street Dundrum on that date in 2019.

The weekly Friday morning vigil was started by a group of concerned local people, including parents and grandparents, who responded to the national and international schools' climate strikes for a safe future. They decided to hold a regular vigil in Dundrum in support of the students' demands, and to use it to raise local awareness of the global climate emergency.

Every Friday morning, rain or shine, the group has taken a stand for the planet on Main Street, engaging with local people and encouraging them to take action in their own lives and to 'vote for climate action' at every opportunity. Numbers have grown, and special occasions have shown the strength of local concerns - in September last, a crowd of 350, including school children, church leaders, business people and local representatives, joined the group to call for urgent climate action by Ireland's political leaders.

Since mid-March, the vigil has moved indoors, and now meets every week online, keeping abreast of developments, and planning initiatives both for *now* - such as emailing local TDs to urge fast and fair climate action – and for *later*, when public events are possible again.

In April 2020, the group is keenly watching developments in government formation, and arguing for an ambitious climate agenda and a 'just transition' – involving all sectors of the population and economy - as the way forward for national recovery from the pandemic. They know that such an agenda for change is the only way to ensure the health and well-being of the Irish people for the long term.

Group members have also been sharing their thoughts on the changes they hope to see in post-Covid-19 Ireland, which the concerted national response to the current emergency has shown to be possible. They hope for: greater solidarity and empathy among different groups in the population; a renewed dedication to protecting the natural world and biodiversity in Ireland; a transformation of transport, agriculture, food distribution and energy use, with cleaner air as a result; and a changed attitude to material goods, with re-using and upcycling instead of 'throw-away' culture.

One insight from these extraordinary times is the urgent need for inter-generational solidarity. In the Covid-19 context, children and young people are willingly accepting severe restrictions in order to protect older people. However, to tackle the climate crisis, the opposite must happen: a safe future for our children and young people will depend on older people (at least in the Western world) now accepting major changes in their daily lives.

Dundrum Climate Vigil fully agrees with all those who say, **'If we can do all this to protect ourselves from coronavirus, we can surely do it for the planet and for long-term human health and well-being'**.
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The group's mailing list counts around 250 supporters, and a weekly electronic newsletter goes out with climate-related information and suggested actions. Currently, the newsletter also shares practical local information for those coping with pandemic-related restrictions, including ideas to help parents with young children explore 'nature outside your window'.

Dundrum Climate Vigil group members are not campaigning alone: they have connections with other local climate action groups in Dublin, with the 'Fridays for Future' weekly protests outside the Dail, and with the broader Irish climate and environmental movement, contributing actively to many country-wide initiatives. They believe that a positive, healthy and sustainable future for Ireland is possible, and they want to play their part in creating it.

Dundrum Climate Vigil welcomes new members. They can contact the group by email at dundrumclimatevigil@mail.com (not gmail!) and via its Facebook page, and can join the newsletter mailing list by sending a request to this email address.

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