

# CENTREPOINT

Newsletter of the Presentation Centre for Policy and Systemic Change

346 Orwell Park Close, Templeogue, Dublin 6W. Tel: 01 4298680 Fax: 01 4298615 Web: www.presentation.ie Email: info@presentation.ie

## Towards a more Compassionate, Just and Sustainable World

By David Rose

A new plan for Presentation ministry outlines key areas of work and challenges facing Presentation Sisters and co-workers in the years ahead.

The plan can be likened to a map that charts the future direction for our work. However, no map or plan adequately describes the journey into ministry that is the privilege of working with people, the sharing of hopes and dreams, anxieties and fears in working for a more compassionate, just and sustainable world, which is our mission.

This mission is rooted in the Christian tradition of social transformation. This calls us to build the kingdom of God. The kingdom is often likened to the pearl of great price, that fulfills the heart's desire. Our desire as Presentation people is enabling individuals, including ourselves, communities, and society to be fully human and fully alive. This is the vision of liberation at the heart of the gospel. It is also about sustainability, living in ways that respect the balance of life in all of creation.

What are the stepping stones on the way to this vision? How do we as Presentation people contribute to realising this vision? The plan calls for action in five key areas. These are spirituality, learning innovation, social inclusion, human rights and ecology.

### Spirituality

Spirituality goes to the heart of the matter. It is about beliefs and values. It is what shapes and moves us and influences all of our relationships with self, people, institutions, the environment and with God. Sr Terry Abraham, Congregational Leader, speaking at a meeting on the plan said:

*The heart of the spirituality of communion is to behold the divine in every piece of creation, in ourselves and in one another. It's a huge challenge to change our perception, our behaviour and our choices. If we live with that mindfulness, look at the world with holy eyes, would there be war and violence? Would there be hunger and poverty? Would there be destruction of the earth?*

The challenge for us is to unpack this understanding of spirituality from within our Christian tradition but also in dialogue with the other great religions.

While all ministry is rooted and grounded in spirituality, and there are people working in initiatives in faith development and retreat centres; the plan will complement this with a team whose focus is creating new opportunities for people to engage in the search for spirituality and faith development.

### Learning Innovation

Learning Innovation involves developing new approaches to learning in particular to combating educational disadvantage. Any one of us, who as educators has taken the time to try a new way of learning with a student who is struggling, is an innovator.

The nature of learning is changing rapidly. In this, the digital age (see article by Michael Hallissy in this newsletter), a shift in understanding is occurring from learning as providing content in schools and institutions to learning as enabling people define their own solutions and possibilities. We are challenged to be pioneers again, like Nano Nagle, in moving to the cutting edge of educational innovation.

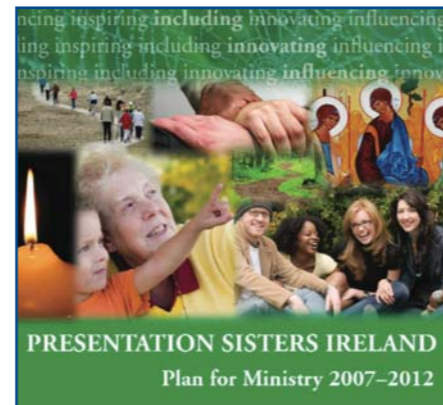
We are doing this by supporting initiatives that target educational disadvantage in the formal and informal education sectors; for example, the Kildare Community Education Partnership. Conferences on learning spaces and our e-learning initiative Notschool.net, targeted at 14-16 year olds who are not benefiting from the system are other examples of this.

### Social Inclusion

Social inclusion means accepting people as they are and listening to them. It is about extending a welcome and being with those for whom life can be a struggle. The plan builds on the movement in ministry to working with and learning from people on the margins. It includes work with Travellers, prisoners, ex-offenders, migrants and refugees, the homeless and local communities experiencing exclusion. The Presentation Centre adds value to this work through its policy work based on the direct experience of those with whom we work.

### Human Rights

Working for human rights means respecting



the innate dignity of each person. From a Christian perspective it means recognising that each person is created in the image and likeness of God. Its about awareness raising and campaigning to change systems that trample on people's rights. Promoting fairtrade, development education projects like Challenge to Change and tackling corporate greed are examples of recent work in this area. The Nagle Community and the International Presentation Association give us capacity to do this in a focussed way but it also involves our personal choices.

### Ecology

Global warming, climate change and limited energy resources are very much in the public consciousness. We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history (Earth Charter) There is a call to live in sustainable ways that respect the delicate balance of nature. The Nano Nagle Centre and organic farm, Ballygriffin and the sustainable living programme are major organisational initiatives in response to this global crisis and complement the many personal choices for change that people are making.

### Conclusion

The plan for ministry exists only to benefit the people we work with and the planet entrusted to our care. The extent to which it does this will be the measure of its success. Significant steps have already been taken towards its implementation.

David Rose is director of the Presentation Centre.



Participants in South Presentation process, including migrants, sisters and students from Presentation Secondary School Ballyphehane, Cork at launch of Report. Photographed by Sean McDougall

## A New Vision for South Presentation

By David Rose

The Presentation Centre has published a new report titled *We Made This*, an important new survey of local needs in the area around South Presentation, Evergreen Street, and some of the suburbs of Cork. South Presentation will be redeveloped as a centre for social inclusion based on ideas generated by the people themselves.

*We Made This* tells the story of how a community of local residents and from across the city of Cork, teenagers, the elderly, Traveller women, people in recovery, recent immigrants and Presentation Sisters and others came together to identify common needs and devise ways of dealing with them.

Using innovative design consultation techniques, the various groups have turned their attention to social problems and unmet needs, which are increasingly putting society under pressure. The Presentation Centre in association with Sean McDougall of Stakeholder Design facilitated the consultation process.

"*We Made This* proves that when communities are given the means to innovate, they are more than capable of building solutions that foster inclusion, cooperation and respect for diverse views," said Sr Anne Coffey, organiser of the process.

The Presentation Sisters have a long history of addressing unmet educational and social needs in partnership with the community. The South Presentation Convent is where Nano Nagle, founder of the Presentation Sisters first started her small schools over 200 years ago for children denied the right to an education.

*We Made This* will inform the redevelopment of the South Presentation Convent complex as an inclusive global learning hub, being designed both to meet local needs and to build on the global presence and work of the Presentation Sisters and co-workers around the world.

Copies of the report are available, email [info@presentation.ie](mailto:info@presentation.ie)



# Digital Literacy for the 21st Century

By Michael Hallissy



Michael Hallissy



## Defining Literacy

There has been a lot written in recent years about the low levels of literacy in our schools, particularly schools in designated disadvantage areas. Department of Education and Science (DES) research in 2004 found that young people in disadvantaged communities were performing well below their counterparts in more affluent communities. The DES proactively responded with the Delivering Equality Of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) strategy. Though this response is to be welcomed there are two issues concerning DEIS and its approach to tackling low literacy levels. Firstly the definition of literacy is very traditional and secondly there is limited reference to how Information Communication Technologies (ICT) can assist learners acquire literacy skills.

*Yet there is a bigger issue and that is our current definition of literacy and we need to ask is it adequate for the 21st century?*

DEIS defines literacy in terms of reading, writing and oral fluency. Such a definition places a heavy emphasis on decoding text – both in terms of understanding and creation. There is no doubt that young people require such skills to perform in today’s world but we need to consider how digital technology can assist in achieving this target. There is evidence from the UK and Australia that ICT can play a part in assisting young people acquire basic literacy skills when used appropriately. However, ICT is no panacea and needs to be embedded in good teaching and support in the home. Yet there is a bigger issue and that is our current definition of literacy and we need to ask is it adequate for the 21st century?

## Learning in the Digital Age

In the 21st century, advanced education systems are moving away from teaching young people standardized knowledge to focusing on skills such as flexibility, creativity and problem solving. In this changed educational world there is growing evidence that the future of learning is digital. There has been tremendous growth in home and school computer ownership over the past decade. Our young people are members of a generation that expects to participate actively in and through their media. Many are ‘digital natives’ using ICT in creative ways to communicate and collaborate through online networks such as MSN, Bebo, and MySpace etc. This is their world and older models of learning, where the teacher is the ‘Sage on Stage’, is struggling to engage them. Naturally these changes are having an impact on our views of what it means to be literate in today’s world.

## Technology and Learning

Literacy in the 21st century is much more than traditional ‘schooled’ literacy, as defined by DEIS. Digital technology is playing a major part in transforming this definition. It is worth remembering that in previous centuries technology, in the form of the printing press, transformed the notion of literacy. The notion of reading changed from oral performance to silent comprehension; the notion of writing changed from copying manuscripts to original creation; and the notion of scholarship changed from mastery of a few religious texts to examination in a wide field of knowledge. In the 21st century there is good reason to believe that digital technologies will have a similar impact in transforming our current definitions of literacy.

*continued on page 3*

## Your Say

Let us know what you think of this newsletter. Your views are welcome.

Write to:  
Presentation Centre  
346 Orwell Park Close, Templeogue, Dublin 6W

Tel 01 4298680  
Fax 01 4298615

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Email info@presentation.ie  
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## Our Mailing List

You have received a copy of Centrepoint because you are on our database of individuals and groups with whom we would like to be in contact. Centrepoint is free. If you do not wish to receive future copies let us know.

# Working towards a Global Agenda

By Mary Rossiter

At an international meeting in India, Presentation Sisters and co-workers committed to tackling global poverty.

*“We will address the root causes of poverty, especially by confronting personal and corporate greed which exploit earth, her peoples and the whole community of life”.*

The commitment was made at the fifth International Presentation Association (IPA) gathering in the Ecumenical Christian Centre, Bangalore, India last November 14th –21st. There was a



series of follow up meetings in four venues around Ireland: Mt. St. Anne’s, Seville Lodge (Kilkenny), Springfort Hotel (Mallow) and Moate to explore how to work towards this global agenda.

Each of these meetings was very well attended by sisters and co-workers/associates. The format was designed so as to give those attending a flavour of India in all its beauty and colour and a sense of the proceedings at the assembly itself so as to better understand and appreciate the commitment made at the assembly. At the gatherings in Ireland and England the story of the development of I.P.A. was recalled and its mission “to channel our resources so that we can speak and act in partnership with others for global justice” acknowledged and confirmed.

All present received an invitation to reflect personally on the issue presented and if so willing to inform



Nagle Community of their chosen way of involvement in the exploration of the issue.

Hopefully in the near future we will together engage more fully with the issue discovering its relevance and challenges for all of us living in the Ireland of today.

*Sr Mary Rossiter is a member of the Nagle Community, which works for human rights and ecology.*

*“ ... a publication that will greatly contribute to the ongoing policy debate on lifelong learning and outreach”*

- said Seán Haughey T.D., Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, speaking at the publication’s launch in the Department of Education.

He went on to say: “‘Learning Together’ provides us with vital new insights and challenges with regard to these policy objectives (on social inclusion). It draws together the conclusions from a four year pilot programme run in partnership with six local organisations and one secondary school from around the country. Participants from Tipperary, Dublin, Cork, Louth, Limerick and Kerry were all involved. The programme, generously funded by the Presentation Sisters and supported by the Presentation Centre for Policy and Systemic Change, focused specifically on targeting educational disadvantage. This was achieved through developing local initiatives in intergenerational learning, outreach to new learners and community education. The issues addressed in the publication are familiar to us all: the need to involve parents in their children’s education, the long-term impact of early intervention, the problems associated with early school leaving and disaffected youth, and the importance of ‘second chance’ education”.

*Copies of the report are available email info@presentation.ie*



# The Audience has taken to the Stage

By Mike Gibbon

The audience has taken to the stage-, so writes Charles Leadbeater, one of the UK's leading thinkers on social change, about the new expectations of users of public services. Modern society where choice, individual preference and individual entitlement to good service are the norm in our consumption of goods and services has heightened our expectation of the public sector. And, because of this, a revolution is taking place in our perception of the public sector. This revolution is coming from three directions; citizens themselves, our most enlightened practitioners, and quickly trying to get in front of the trend politicians and policymakers.

The UK Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, wrote recently in *The Financial Times* that the government will 'not only further enhance choice but also empower both the users of services and all the professionals who deliver them to drive up standard for all'.

The Innovation Unit has been working with leading practitioners and more recently users to explore this new triangle of the state, the practitioner, and the user in the design and delivery of public services. We have a rigorous innovation framework and a strong commitment to discovering the future in the now by concentrating on exploring 'Next Practice' in our system. All education systems work very hard at disseminating current best practice; we concentrate on the next practice dimension. Where are the weak signals in the system now that will lead to step change, but for the moment need stimulus and support?

One of our major projects has been on personalisation. Everyone wants personalised public services. It is a 'motherhood and apple pie' no brainer. when and where they present themselves. The temptation is to sacrifice this ideal as utopian and unattainable.

And this is where our Next Practice Innovation Methodology rescues us from inaction. (See Hannon, Valerie (2007), *Next Practice in education: a disciplined approach to education* and our website for more detail [www.innovation-unit.co.uk](http://www.innovation-unit.co.uk)).

***But how do you move an education system which has always thought in terms of cohorts, year groups, and whole school populations towards meeting, first and foremost, individual needs ...***

Firstly, really analyse the issue with forensic rigour so that you know what you are really tackling. We did not pursue a path of waxing lyrical about the ideals of personalisation but went for the jugular. What is perceived as the big issue? Its resources stupid! So the project became Resourcing Personalisation. How do you reconfigure your available people, time, space and place so that you can tackle personalisation?



Mike Gibbon

And, of course, as soon as you think in those terms you begin the process of disentangling education provision from the basic Victorian model we have had for the last 100 plus years of fixed buildings, programmes, timetables etc. In the Information Age of digital communication, virtual communities, individual access to the entirety of the internet, why does this all stop at the school gate and start again in children's lives after school?

So, some of our leading schools and practitioners have been experimenting with 'anytime anywhere' learning, student leadership and student led digital resources, motivational interviewing, primary school children designing their learning journey for secondary school. And, underpinning all of this, is the question of how does the leadership of the school put together a range of provision, mindsets and student engagement strategies that make the individual projects listed greater than the sum of their parts?

***Mike Gibbon is Chief Executive of The Innovation Unit, London.***

# Notschool.net Ireland Begins

By Marianne Checkley

*Notschool.net Ireland is a new initiative of the Presentation Centre targeted at 14-16 year old who for a variety of reasons are no longer engaging in the formal education system.*

On 12th February in the Digital Hub, Dublin five young people took the brave step to becoming Ireland's first researchers on Notschool.net.

It was an exciting day for all concerned where months of hard work and planning culminated in opening up a world of possibility and new opportunities to a group of young people outside of our traditional education system. Induction days continued through February, March and April as the team travelled around the country from



Carraroe to Youghal.

We now have 21 researchers on the system – the majority are from the Dublin area with young people from Galway, Cork and Limerick also.

The ethos behind Notschool is one of individualised learning within an on-line community and this is reflected in our Irish researchers. Each one works away at their own

level, developing a relationship with their mentor who emails them every day, planning projects, making new friends online, contributing to Notschool communities and generally exploring the opportunities available to them.

All are working towards an ICT certification – some have even achieved this already! We are also seeing budding talents in creative writing, photography, hair and beauty, make up design, cookery to name a few and Notschool offers

certification in these areas that validates the work of the young people and sometimes offers them a sense of achievement they may have never felt or have forgotten about. Each week brings a new surprise as we watch the progress of these young people. It's wonderful to be working to ensure this potential isn't lost – We'll keep you posted on our progress.

***Marianne Checkley is Team Leader of Notschool.net Ireland.***



## Digital Literacy *continued from page 2*

### Literacy in the 21st Century

So what does it mean to be literate in the 21st century? There is a wide range of emerging literacies such as media, ICT, information, multimedia, scientific, digital, visual and economic literacy. The notion of digital literacy developed by the EU DigEuLit project is worth considering. Digital Literacy here is defined as "the awareness, attitude and ability of individuals to appropriately use digital tools and facilities to identify, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, analyse and synthesize digital resources, construct new knowledge, create media expressions and communicate with others, in the context of specific life situations, in order to enable constructive social action; and to reflect upon this process". It is long but it is comprehensive and recognises that digital literacy is a lifelong literacy and **not** something that is acquired by a certain age or by the time you graduate from an educational institution. In this way it is a skill that is constantly being developed.

In my own work, as Director of Learning in the The Digital Hub, I have witnessed many examples of people acquiring digital literacy skills - these range from children in primary school creating comics to adults developing radio programmes. For example, primary school students are creating their own digital stories using digital cameras, computers and software. They are learning the technical skills of using cameras and software in the context of creating digital stories. Such approaches provide

wonderful opportunities to teach 'traditional literacy skills' in a way that is engaging and motivating. In addition, they are acquiring the digital literacy skills they need for the 21st century.

### Creating Opportunity to Acquire New Skills

But a word of warning. Many young people in disadvantaged communities do not have access to digital technologies such as computers, digital cameras etc. and could miss out on the opportunity to acquire these digital literacy skills. There is an onus

***But a word of warning. Many young people in disadvantaged communities do not have access to digital technologies***

on us all to ensure that young people have an opportunity to acquire these skills. Programmes, such as DEIS, should adopt a more expanded definition of literacy and build programmes where young people have an opportunity to acquire digital literacy skills. Some work is already taking place within the DES on developing an expanded definition of literacy and we welcome the publication of this research later in the year. Based on our work with schools in The Digital Hub we are exploring what this expanded definition of literacy might look with the National College of Ireland. It is hoped that this research will inform future DES policy and particularly impact on programmes such as DEIS. It is hoped that this research will feed into the development of new approaches and ultimately improvements in our literacy levels.

***Michael Hallissy is Director of Learning at the Digital Hub Development Agency, Dublin. [www.thedigitalhub.com](http://www.thedigitalhub.com)***

## Presentation Sisters take a stand at National Greener Ireland Expo 2008

By Imelda Carew

Presentation Sisters and co-workers, under the name Presentation Network, were present at The National Greener Ireland Exhibition in the RDS on 19/20 April 2008. It was a valuable opportunity to showcase and inform the general public about practical ways in which we all can become more environmentally friendly. 'By adapting our lifestyle we can save both money and energy, improve our nutritional intake and in the long term sustain a healthier life and environment' said Emma Kennedy, the organiser of the event.

*By adapting our lifestyle we can save both money and energy, improve our nutritional intake and in the long term sustain a healthier life and environment.*

For Presentation people it enabled us to spell out steps we have taken to live out the commitment of our Congregational Gathering 2006 namely that we 'move towards ways of living that enable social justice and sustainability.' An important emphasis for us was to highlight the interconnectedness between contemplation, action for justice and reverence and care for the earth. Throughout the two days there were Presentation Sisters in attendance at the stand ready to engage with all who passed by.

The experience of being at the stand was very life-giving and enriching. Our stand attracted a wide range of people. When some people saw the name Presentation they were automatically attracted as they had an aunt or grand-aunt in the order. Others were attracted by the words Sustainable Living. More saw the name Nano Nagle Centre and wanted to find out where it was and what it had to offer. For others the work being done by a community group in Mountmellick was the attraction. Many saw us as different to most of the rest of the stands and wanted to see what we were up to!

A constant stream of people visited us throughout the two days. There was a good cross section of age groups, some younger families, but the majority were from the middle age group - a good number of teachers or people associated with education. The majority knew very little about Pres. and were in admiration of the fact that we were involved in this type of work. Some were particularly interested in hearing how caring for the earth and ecology fitted in with our life, as religious Sisters, and in particular its link with the gospel and call to justice.



## Stop Climate Chaos

By Imelda Carew

**Stop Climate Chaos** is a coalition of civil society organisations campaigning to ensure Ireland plays its part in preventing runaway climate change. The Presentation Centre is a member of the coalition and is actively promoting its campaigns. The vision of this coalition is 'A world where human impact on the global climate has been contained to a level that enables social, environmental and economic justice for all.' Its most recent campaign 'HOW GREEN IS IRELAND' highlights how far we have to go to do our fair share to prevent runaway climate change.

### So, just how green is Ireland?

Among the rich countries we are the sixth most polluting on a per person basis. If everyone polluted like the Irish we would need three planet Earths to survive. If we continue to pollute at current levels, we risk reversing any gains made in the fight against poverty.

Climate change is happening and humanity is causing it. The reports from the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change confirm this. To prevent climate change running out of control we must limit the rise in average global temperatures to 2°C or less. To achieve this we need to cut global emissions in half between now and 2050. Right now in Ireland each of us is responsible for 17.5 tonnes of emissions per year.

Stop Climate Chaos welcomes the Programme for Government's commitment to an average cut in emissions of 3% a year. To make sure it happens we need to see that commitment put into law along with a clear, fair price on carbon pollution across the whole economy. Now is the time for action. Log on to [www.stopclimatechaos.ie](http://www.stopclimatechaos.ie)

*Sr Imelda Carew is programme leader for ecology at Presentation Centre.*



## Sustainable Living in Practice

*The Sustainable Living Programme is a new awareness raising resource for all who want to do something about environmental damage. The programme shows how small changes in lifestyle can make a big difference to the planet. It is available as an email resource pack. Imelda Carew of the Presentation Sustainable Task Group explains how it came about:*

"Hardly a day goes by without a mention, in newspapers, radio or TV of some aspect of environmental degradation and the ensuing consequences to people, to all forms of life and planet Earth.

The natural world, made up of many interconnecting life-cycles, has nurtured and sustained life for millions of years. These life-cycles are now breaking down due to deforestation, abuse, pollution, and overuse of finite resources.

The environment has always been shaped by human activity but in recent years with the increased use of technology, intensive farming and urbanization, the human impact has been greatly magnified with the resultant loss of biodiversity.

Many of the environmental disasters, which appear to have been caused by climate change, have inevitably affected the poorer countries. All of this calls for changes in our way of living and to become good stewards of the earth entrusted to our care as St. Paul says 'Let everyone see us as the servants of Christ and stewards of the secret works of God' (1 Cor. 4:1)

With this in mind, the Presentation Sustainable Living Task group developed a simple but challenging programme to assist us in making these changes. The programme is a nine month commitment to raising ones awareness and to changing ones practices so that together we move closer to being in right relationship with God, and all of creation."

*(For copies of the Sustainable Living Programme contact [presnagle@jmin.iol.ie](mailto:presnagle@jmin.iol.ie))*

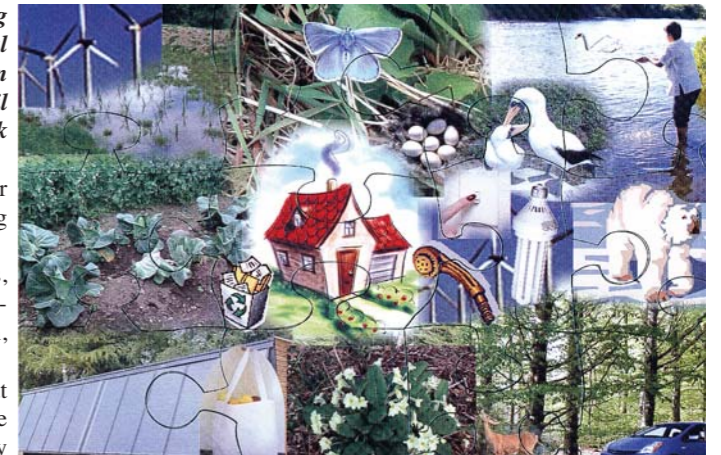
## Sisters in Slovakia take up the challenge with New Sustainable Convent

The Sisters in Slovakia have taken up the challenge of sustainable living especially in relation to their new premises. Sr. Anne McNamara writes: "The Presentation Sisters in Slovakia recently built a Convent in a town called Spisske Podhradie, which is in the east of Slovakia. The Convent was officially opened on 28th April 2007.

"We did much research on how to incorporate as many sustainable and environmentally friendly aspects as possible. These have included solar panels on the roof-side that gets the most sunshine, thus heating all our hot water needs. We have five panels that are capable of heating water. As we get a lot of warm and hot weather in Slovakia from early morning to late afternoon, these are proving to be very successful. In winter, natural gas automatically takes over and heats the water. Our house is insulated so that it maintains the heat in winter, where temperatures can get down to minus 20 and it keeps the house cool in summer where the temperatures are over 40 degrees.

"Our wastewater is directed towards three channels, where it is purified and some of the water purifies and cleans the channels and all of it is returned to the earth as clean water. All our rainwater also flows into this system and contributes to the cleaning of the channels.

"We separate all our waste and our community waste bin has four independent compartments where we immediately separate our waste and put it in the local recycling bins, i.e. glass, paper, tins, plastics and



## Sustainable Living

**"Our biggest challenge in this century is to take an idea that sounds abstract, sustainable development, and turn it into reality for all the world's people"**

*(Kofi Annan, United Nations 2001)*



cartons. We have a large composter for all our compostible waste. We have an open fire and waste paper can also be used there, once it is first dipped in water and the water squeezed out and left to dry, thus creating paper briquette balls to start the fire, they are very useful. We also only use energy saving light bulbs and all our electrical appliances are Class A, which are most environmentally friendly."

## SUSTAINABLE LIVING PROGRAMME - ONE YEAR ON

### One Day Seminar on Sustainable Living

You are invited to join with all who engaged with the Presentation Sustainable Living Programme on 7th June 2008 in the Nano Nagle Centre, Ballygriffin, Mallow, Co Cork.

**Contact: [presnagle@jmin.iol.ie](mailto:presnagle@jmin.iol.ie)**

Keynote Speakers from the Notice Nature and Climatechange.ie Campaigns