

Report by Willie Joe McClure

PUFFING THE AWARENESS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION



Dr Anita Mckeown is an artist living and working on the Iveragh Peninsula and a researcher with SMARTlab Skellig, a research group working as part of a UCD project. The SMARTlab Skellig team includes 2 artists, Anita and colleague Seán O'Laoghaire; marine biologists Lucy Hunt and Eleanor Turner and engineers, Colin Keogh and Dr Shane Keaveney. For the next two years they are working on an exciting project called CoDesRes - Codesigning for resilience, on the Iveragh Peninsula supported by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The project is one of only 5 national projects supported by the EPA to bring the Sustainable Development goals into people's daily lives.

They are going to do this in a way that is relevant, fun, engaging and non-judgemental, and

a recent example of their strategy in educating the young through awareness took place at the Skellig Experience as part of the May the 4th Festival which was promoted by Fáilte Ireland and the Wild Atlantic Way. Using the teams interdisciplinary skills they wove mythology, science fiction and marine biology together adding in particular environmental adaptation and all in an engaging arts and crafts workshop for children 2 - 12 years. Seán O'Laoghaire, our local seanchai created a special story to tell of Aine's attempts to save the ocean from plastic pollution. As part of the workshop Eleanor and Anita began asking the children questions about possible adaptations that might appear in puffins of the future. By linking questions to real issues that Atlantic Puffins are experiencing due to human-driven climate change. e.g. changes to food sources and changes to location of food they were able to gently begin a conversation in a way that small children can understand without fear. This approach created the foundation for them to create the Puffins of the future, a fun way for them to start to use their imagination and creativity to explore environmental adaptation and raise awareness of concerns that can be overwhelming or frightening...

We asked Anita, "Will this make a real difference?" "On its own no but as part of a coherent strategy to link art, design, ecology and storytelling who knows what new opportunities and solutions may emerge once we are aware of the situation."

I am happy to say that in the pages of our upcoming editions of the South Kerry Advertiser we will be bringing you more on the work of the SMARTlab team as they conduct their CoDesRes project over the next two years.

Dr Anita Mckeown is the principal investigator of CoDesRes: Co-designing for resilience using P2P networks and STEAM place-based learning interventions to find out more contact anita.mckeown@ucd.ie or visit www.codesres.ie you can also follow us on facebook and twitter - #codesres

