

Comments by Lara O'Brien
EIRE 6 Restoration Group convenor
9 April 2022

A Uachtaráin, Mrs Higgins, distinguished guests, family and friends.

Thank you all for being here with us, on this special day to mark the restoration of the Howth Eire 6 sign.

We look to her role in the past as a wartime neutrality sign, and to her future as she teaches generations about our history and welcomes people home.

Today is a dream come true.

As a child in the early 1980's, a wildfire swept up over the East Mountain, revealing the sign. And, as we heard earlier, the letter E peeked out enough to be recognised, allowing us to discover our history and our heritage, immersed in nature.

That learning is alive again now as young families, Transition Year students and walkers alike discover the sign and experience the beauty of nature that Howth provides.

Thousands of people each week contemplate war and peace, and peace of mind, as they pass the sign.

And what a journey it has been to make her light shine.

In September of 2019, a group of 7 formed a strategy group, the Howth EIRE 6 Restoration Group, to gauge support in the community for a restoration.

We received a resounding, YES, from our sports clubs, organizations and businesses.

Indeed, it is community, and especially our youth, that has been our North Star.

There are so many of you to thank, so bear with me for a moment.

To Donal Moriarty of Aer Lingus and to Peter Kearney of the Irish Aviation Authority, we thank you ... as the education and maintenance programs **are** the future of the sign.

To the SAAO for their crucial, early support.

To the Heritage Council whose community grant gave us our wings to complete the restoration.

To the Howth Peninsula Heritage Society for your steady support throughout, to the National Parks and Wildlife Services, and our fantastic consultants, Jim Kilroy, Dr. Mary Tubridy, Helen Lahert and Nicole Dunne.

Today would not have been possible without the incredible generosity of **donors** including Fergal and Rachael Naughton, and I see Fergal with us today, thank you. To Fingal County Council, to the Ronan Group Real Estate, and Georgie Cooke thank you for **YOUR** support and for making our pathways so beautiful.

The people of the Howth Peninsula are the lifeforce of this project.

You have supported it with your labour, your laughter, your encouragement, and your donations, even donations of traditional music being played for us as we brushed the soil from the stone in spring of last year.

To the Howth and Sutton Community, we are bound by our heritage and **today is a testament to you all.**

To our dedicated volunteers, **YOU DID THIS.**

To the founding members of the Howth EIRE 6 Restoration Group, Philip O'Connor, Conn Redmond, Lorcan Blake, Dermot Quinn, Orla Rorke and Cathal Murnane, it has been an honour of a lifetime to work with each of you on this project.

Thank you also to Geraldine Mahony and Dearbhail Mc Donald, for coming on board for the official launch.

Since we set out on this journey, **EVERYONE** in this unlikely group stepped up with passion, energy and commitment to bring a community together... during a pandemic ... for a historic restoration shaped in heritage, community, education and ecology.

We have, together, created memories that are etched out forever over these last two years. *Magic moments like unearthing the first stones, finding the elusive 6 and watching the Sea Scouts bound over the hill, after a long lockdown.*

No doubt you have your own. But, together, we will remember our efforts in striving to keep the integrity of the sign to honour the men who built it.

And now, on behalf of the Howth Eire 6 Restoration Group and our Howth community, I'd like to extend our welcome to visitors and returning Irish alike.

From EIRE 6, fáilte arais!