



PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE USE

Understanding the value of Nature

What: EUROPARC Federation brings together the present and future leaders of Protected Areas at Europe's largest gathering of its kind under the theme "**Understanding the value of Nature**"

When: 28th September -1st October 2014

Where: Killarney National Park, Ireland

Event host: EUROPARC Federation together with the Irish Ministry for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht with the support of the Irish Heritage Council and the Irish Forestry body – Coillte.

Languages: English, German, French

Regensburg, May 19 – Oscar Wilde once said "*...a cynic, knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing*". While modern society appears to be capable of putting a monetary value on almost anything, understanding the true and full value of nature and its potential benefits for society poses a particular challenge.

More than 300 professionals responsible for the management of Nature and sustainable development of Protected Areas across Europe will gather this autumn in Killarney, Ireland to consider the Value of Nature.

Nature needs to have a secure place in our European value system; it is the life support system from which we draw resources for our 21st century society! In 2010, TEEB – The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity report examined the benefits the world gets free from Nature. This autumn, the annual EUROPARC Federation conference, supported by the Irish Ministry of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, seeks to highlight not just the environmental and social benefits of Protected Areas, but also the real economic benefits that can be derived from Nature.

Keynote speakers from Canada, Finland, UK, Belgium and Ireland will gather in Killarney and explore the value of Nature to society, with intensive and topical workshops drawing on best practise from across Europe, debating in detail not just how we protect Nature but the values that underpin that need to conserve Nature.

EUROPARC President Thomas Hansson, (SE) indicated that "Europe's Nature heritage, including the designated Natura 2000 sites are managed better through international cooperation and we are delighted that our hosts in Ireland, have provided this unique opportunity to not just consider the values of Nature but to show the practical benefits Protected Areas provide for communities across Europe."

Jimmy Deenihan, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht said 'Placing a value on nature and measuring its worth to national and international communities is not easy. I am delighted that Ireland, through my Ministry, has presented the EUROPARC Federation and its members with a platform to coalesce and debate how we can improve awareness, deepen understanding and enhance appreciation of Europe's shared natural inheritance.' The Minister added, 'this year's conference will showcase the economic and socio-economic potential of the natural heritage sector and improve our understanding of how economies, the natural environment, and well-being of societies are interlinked.'





Notes for editors:

About the conference:

The **EUROPARC Conference 2014** is organised by the EUROPARC Federation and kindly co-organised by the Irish Ministry for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht with the support of the Irish Heritage Council and the Irish Forestry body – Coillte. The annual EUROPARC conference is the best opportunity for people working in Europe's Protected Areas to network. Through this gathering, they learn from each other's experiences and stay current with policy and practice in all aspects of integrated Protected Area management.

About the EUROPARC Federation:

EUROPARC is the umbrella organisation for Protected Areas throughout Europe. The aim of the network is to facilitate the increase of new partners throughout Europe by providing interested parks with information on the most important aspects of a Protected Area Management. EUROPARC Federation is an independent, non-governmental organisation whose membership brings together organisations responsible for the management of most of Europe's Protected Areas. Currently it represents over 370 members in 36 countries. These include Protected Areas, governmental departments, NGO's and businesses who themselves manage the green jewels of Europe's land, sea, mountains, forests, rivers and cultural heritage.

About the Irish Ministry of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

The Ministry of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht oversees and has policy responsibility for the conservations, preservation, protection, development and presentation of Ireland's heritage and culture, The Ministry also seeks to promote the Irish language, to support the Gaeltacht and to assist the sustainable development of island communities. The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is part of the Ministry of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The role of NPWS is to secure the conservation of a representative range of ecosystems and maintain and enhance populations of flora and fauna in Ireland; to implement the EU Habitats and Birds Directives; to designate and advise on the protection of Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Natural Heritage Areas having particular regard to the need to consult with interested parties; to make the necessary arrangements for the implementation of National and EU legislation and policies for the ratification and implementation of the range of international Conventions and Agreements relating to natural heritage; and to manage, maintain and develop State-owned National Parks and Nature Reserves.

Interview opportunities:

- Thomas Hansson, EUROPARC President
- Carol Ritchie, EUROPARC Director
- Irish Ministry officials available on request

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