

Earth Hour - Your time to take action.

Irish people and businesses urged to be part of a billion person event for Earth Hour

25th March 2009: Change, Ireland's national climate change awareness campaign, is urging everyone across Ireland to join with one billion people around the globe in taking part in Earth Hour on Saturday 28 March at 8.30pm, by turning off the lights in their homes and businesses. This is the third annual Earth Hour and one billion people, in more than 1000 cities around the world are expected to take this symbolic action against climate change. The Change campaign hopes people at home and businesses all around Ireland will follow suit. Last year, Ireland played a critical role in Earth Hour's development as the only country in Europe to support Earth Hour.

Iconic buildings across Ireland will turn their lights off during Earth Hour.

In Dublin, public buildings including **Government buildings, Leinster House, the Custom House,** and the **Four Courts** will be turning off their lights for Earth Hour.

Countrywide, **The Rock Of Cashel**, the most visited heritage site in Ireland will be plunged into darkness for Earth Hour, as will **Cahir Castle, Ormonde Castle**, Carrick on Suir, **Donegal Castle** and **Trim Castle** in Co Meath, the largest Anglo Norman castle in Ireland.

"At 8.30pm on March 28th, I'm hoping that people will not only turn off their lights for an hour. I hope people will make a decision to make a permanent change in the way they use energy," says Mr John Gormley, T.D., Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. "By doing your bit and not wasting energy every day, you can also save hundreds of euro a year. By taking part in this global green event, we can show the world that Ireland cares and wants to play its part in tackling climate change.

"Everyone has a role in combating climate change and Earth Hour is a symbol of the power we have to make a difference. Through one simple action, turning off our lights for one hour, we can deliver a powerful message about the need to reduce our carbon footprint. People can also find out their personal carbon number and tips on how to lower it at www.change.ie. Know your number and try to reduce it."

Dr. Martin Mansergh, T.D., Minister for the Office for Public Works, confirmed that "the Irish monuments taking part in Earth Hour are comparable with any of the other international landmarks participating in this event and are a wonderful addition to Earth Hour 09", he said."

Minister Gormley visited EirGrid's Transmission Control Room this morning with Tony Lowes, Friends of the Irish Environment to see the benefits that the big switch-off could bring.

"Earth Hour by its very nature is the essence of grassroots action - the biggest grassroots action in history", says Tony Lowes, Friends of the Irish Environment and co-ordinator of Earth Hour in Ireland, "and both the Minister for the Environment and EirGrid deserve great credit for their critical and continuing support. This year the lights are going out all over Europe and Earth Hour is everywhere. Earth Hour has captured the attention of the citizens of the world. Earth Hour is the platform for an unprecedented global mandate on climate change. By flipping a switch and turning out the lights individuals from all corners of the globe will unite in a single vote with a simple message to our leaders – we want action on climate change now."

EirGrid reported a reduction of 50 megawatts of electricity used in the hours around Earth Hour last year, the first year that Ireland took part in this global initiative. One megawatt is equivalent to the approximate use of 650 domestic homes. Generating one megawatt for one hour, using the mix of normal generation would cause emissions of approximately 400 kilogrammes of CO₂.

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“At this time of economic turmoil, the investment needed to tackle climate change can help lift economies out of financial crisis”, says Minister Gormley. “We will need to invent new ways to reduce our reliance on oil and other fossil fuels. We will need to invest in upgrading our buildings, our transport systems and our energy systems. Hundreds of billions of euro invested around the world will generate millions of jobs.”

From showering in the morning, to checking emails or boiling a kettle – many of the activities that we engage in on a daily basis create carbon emissions that contribute to climate change

Some of the things you can do to reduce your carbon number include

- Replace traditional light bulbs with energy-saving ones, saving you €46 a year on your electricity bill - and energy saving light bulbs last 10 times longer
- When buying new kitchen appliances – fridge, washing machine etc - make sure they are rated A++. All appliances have a rating. Just ask.
- Insulate your home. Government grants are available – up to €4000
- You can save €40 a year by fitting draught proofing. That’s €40 every year, forever, once the work is done
- If you’re thinking of changing your car, buy a low emissions vehicle and save on the purchase price and on motor tax every year.

There is a lot more you can do too – log onto www.change.ie to find out your carbon number and ways to reduce it. When you reduce energy, you save money.

Earth Hour started in Sydney in 2007 when 2.2 million people and businesses switched off the lights in homes and businesses for an hour. Last year 50 million people in 35 countries participated, including Ireland.

The Earth Hour and Change campaign has been brought together by the co-operation and close partnership of Bord Gais Energy, Solas, Power of One, ESB Customer Supply and EirGrid.

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