

## **FIVE BRAVE INDIVIDUALS TUNE INTO THE CHALLENGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

24 October 2008: The five people who will compete over the next nine months to reduce their carbon number for a first prize of a ten thousand euro (€10,000) makeover for their home / garden / lifestyle were announced today (24 October). Change, the government's national climate change awareness campaign and The Last Word on Today FM, have partnered together for this Know Your Number challenge. The challenge aims to encourage individuals to understand their carbon number and to show them how to change their behaviour in order to reduce that number over the next nine months.

"Everybody in Ireland has a Carbon Count Number and no matter how low or high it is we can each take some action to reduce it and help tackle climate change and save money too. This competition is going to help people to understand their carbon number and more importantly show them practical things they can do to reduce it," says competition judge, Jim Gannon, from Change. "We hope that listeners to the Last Word will identify with a contestant who has a similar lifestyle to their own and follow their lead in making similar lifestyle changes to lower their number. "

### **The contestants**

- Trevor Gleeson from Rathwire, Co Westmeath
- Mairead Carney from Kiltimagh, Co Mayo
- Fiona McAleenan, from Bettystown, Co. Meath
- Ger Eager who lives in Shannon Co Clare
- Larry Jones from Clonshaugh, Dublin

"We think the contestants will have some fun in doing something that is serious and fun and in telling all of our listeners about their experiences on a regular basis," Matt Cooper, Presenter of The Last Word. "We really hope they enjoy themselves and that everyone will enjoy them doing it, because I don't think it's going to be particularly easy for them to give up on some of the things they've taken for granted. I won't be treating them like the politicians we have on the programme but they'll still have to face some stern questions if they fail their monthly tasks or, horror of horrors, find their carbon footprint numbers going up during the process."

"We've had such a fantastic reaction from our listeners all over Ireland to our 'Know Your Number' competition which shows that people out there are really interested in finding out how they can save money on their energy bills and how they can upgrade their homes not only to improve their carbon number but to make their homes more valuable," Mary O'Hagan, Senior Producer The Last Word. "I really admire the five people who have been chosen to take up this challenge, they're very brave. I don't think I'd like someone dissecting the contents of my rubbish bin!"

"Over the coming week we will be putting the five contestants through a Change bootcamp to provide them with all the information and the tools to succeed in this challenge to reduce their carbon number," continued Jim Gannon. "During November and December they will have to complete a number of tasks, including making Christmas and doing the grocery shopping more environmentally friendly."

Nearly 500 people entered the competition on The Last Word. The five chosen contestants' carbon count number has been measured and will continue to be tracked on the Change.ie carbon calculator throughout the competition and there will be monthly tasks to keep them motivated. Eliminations will

take place before Christmas and in the Spring; the three remaining finalists will compete for the overall prize and the winner will be announced in July 2009. The overall winner will be the contestant who reduces their carbon number the most and will receive a home / garden / lifestyle sustainability 'makeover' worth €10,000. The 2<sup>nd</sup> prize will be €5,000 worth of sustainable home / garden / lifestyle improvements and the 3<sup>rd</sup> prize will be an Eco-holiday in Ireland to the value of €2,000.

You can track progress of the contestants taking on the Know Your Number challenge, and hear from the judges too, on The Last Word on Today FM every Friday (4.30-7pm) and on the website, [www.Change.ie](http://www.Change.ie) and on [www.Todayfm.com](http://www.Todayfm.com).

To find out what your carbon number is log onto [www.Change.ie](http://www.Change.ie) and complete the carbon calculator and it will also advise you on what habits you could change to reduce your number. So far nearly 80,000 people have found out their carbon number at [change.ie](http://change.ie) since the calculator was launched in May 2008.

Ends.

### **Contestants' Biographies**

#### **Mairead Carney**

Mairead Carney from Kiltimagh, Co Mayo is a 35-year old working mum of one. As an area executive for the Citizens Information Board, Mairead has to travel throughout Connaught for her work, sometimes up to 180 miles a day. She has taken two flights for work to Dublin this year, as well as three flights to visit her sister in London and one for her sister's hen weekend in New York. Mairead's home is a 4-bed bungalow built in 1972 with double block cavity walls half way up on the ground floor while upstairs is single brick. There is no insulation in the attic, and Mairead hopes to tackle cavity walls by the end of the year. She feels that her house is damp. She rarely uses the oil fired central heating, instead opting for the solid fuel stove, attached to a back boiler to heat water and radiators.

#### **Fiona McAleenan**

Fiona McAleenan, from Bettystown, Co. Meath, is a 48 year old working mother of seven. Fiona works three days a week as a solicitor in Essex Quay and her husband, Gerry, works full time for HSE Drug Rehabilitation in Capel Street. Fiona travels to work by private bus with her eldest son Ruaidhri, who is studying journalism in Ballyfermot College. Gerry drives a '08 Opel Zafira to work everyday and drops the four youngest children to school on the way. Her seven children range in ages from four to 21. The family of nine live in a two-storey, 5-bed, detached house. The windows are double glazed but there is a sky light, which leads to loss of heat. Fiona admits that insulation in the house is poor and needs improving, especially in the attic. With seven children in the house, the washing machine is always in use, but they hardly ever use the dryer. There are four televisions and a skybox in the house. Fiona's family took two flights last year, to Cyprus in May and Portugal in August.

#### **Ger Eager**

Ger Eager lives in Shannon, County Clare with his four fellow-students - Enda, Joe, John and Fergal. They are all in their final year of Hotel Management studies in Shannon College of Catering. They have started to share the the 70km round trip drive to and from college every day. Aged 21, Ger took six flights over the past year and he and his friends are planning a number of holidays in the coming months, to Frankfurt and Belgium. Their rented house is a 2-storey, semi-detached 5-bed with a large sitting/living room, 3 bathrooms and oil fired central heating and an immersion to heat the water that doesn't have a

lagging jacket. Ger says the house is draughty although it does have double glazed windows. Between them they have five laptops and use the washer/dryer. They don't compost but they do fill the green bin for recycling and bring all their cans to the recycling centre in Shannon.

### **Larry Jones**

Larry Jones lives in Clonshaugh, Dublin 17 with his wife Angela. They have four daughters and are due to become grandparents soon. Angela is a home-maker while Larry drives about 40 miles a day to work as a Safety Officer in Intel, Leixlip. He took three flights this year, for holidays in Rome and Budapest and a football trip to Liverpool. Larry's home is an end of terrace two-storey three-bed, built in the late 1970s. There is gas fired central heating, weather glazed windows and fleece on the attic floor but no insulation. Larry says that there is no damp but that the house is draughty and they installed heavy lined curtains to combat this. They have 5 televisions, two laptops and the dishwasher is always on – at half-load. The family recycles their waste using the green bin for dry recyclables and a brown bin for food and garden waste provided by from Dublin City Council.

### **Trevor Gleeson**

Trevor Gleeson from Rathwire, Co Westmeath is a 32-year old Dad of two young children. His wife, Tracey, is a home-maker while Trevor drives a 100km round trip every day to work as a Treasury Manager in CRH in Clondalkin, Co Dublin. Trevor enjoys his foreign travel and took six flights in the past year, including some work travel to the States and Europe and two trips to Turkey where the family has a holiday home. Trevor says he simply doesn't know where to start on tackling his carbon number. The family home is a large ten year old five-bed dormer bungalow with little insulation and they leave the oil fired central heating on constantly. The windows are wooden framed and double-glazed but he says they are draughty and need sealing. He loves gadgets and knows he is consuming a lot of electricity to power all of the family's televisions, games consoles and electrical appliances.