



Irish Heritage Trust Launches New Learning Opportunities at Fota House

Fota Learning Zone creates a unique curriculum-linked experience for Transition Year and Leaving Certificate Students.

Fota House, Cork - Aug. 24, 2010: Fota Learning Zone, a new digital resource for Fota House, Cork was launched today by Professor Conor Newman of The Heritage Council. It is one of many events taking place around the country during Heritage Week 2010, 21st to 29th August.

This innovative project allows teachers and students to work online to plan and develop their visit to Fota based on their specific curriculum needs. It will then link directly to the experiences they will have when they visit Fota through hands-on project work.

“Having a house like Fota is a great help,” says Jennifer McCrea, Project Coordinator for Fota Learning Zone. “It is the physical embodiment of the social, political and economic changes that occurred over the last one hundred and fifty years and we have used the house as an example of primary source evidence, so that when students visit, they can experience history all around them.”

Fota Learning Zone also has technical appeal as it encourages students to use skills in areas such as self-directed learning via “WebQuests”. These WebQuests refer to learning exercises that give the student an authentic task they must complete and are usually undertaken as a group project. “We’re now dealing with a generation of digital experts who work intuitively with technology. That’s why we have created learning tools that guide them to quality online resources to support what they learn in class”, says Dr. Danielle O’Donovan, the project’s Technical Coordinator.

Speaking at the launch, Kevin Baird, Irish Heritage Trust CEO, explained the reasons behind the project; “It’s a privilege to care for special places like Fota House. We believe that the best way to do that is to create as many opportunities as possible for people to experience the property. The more support we gather, the more we can invest in repairs and activities like this to help keep Fota open for everyone to enjoy. This project for example, would not have been possible without financial support from The Heritage Council and from the time and resources generously shared with us from colleagues in other organisations.”

The Irish Heritage Trust plans to learn from this initial stage of the project and intends to expand the content of the resource in time. The Trust also hopes to develop this resource for other historic properties to give more people the opportunity to access these special places.

Fota Learning Zone

The Leaving Certificate resources contain a number of themed learning units including: 'Land Acts', 'Essential Exhibitions', 'The Anglo Irish Novel – Context & Creativity', 'Fota House - Land Acts & Land War' and 'Heritage in the Marketplace'. Each unit links to key themes in various subjects including History, Art History & Appreciation, Business Studies and English.

The resources for Transition Year will be more multi-disciplinary and will cover a broad range of topics relating to the social, functional and architectural history of Fota. 'Heritage in the Marketplace' and 'Essential Exhibitions' will offer the students an opportunity to develop skills in real life situations. The educational team has exploited the functional, design and decorative aspects of Fota House and Gardens and will encourage students to engage creatively with Fota through practical art activities relating to the house and garden.

The resource aims to be a rich source of visual material as well as primary and secondary source documentation. It features a 'Teacher's Area' containing a wealth of information in the form of 'Fact Packs' so that teachers can easily find information on how to prepare for onsite workshops with experienced guides or use the material for pre and post-visit activities and a guide on possible curriculum linkages.

We hope this resource will encourage young people to feel at home in the heritage environment and help to develop the next generation of historic house supporters and visitors.

Fota Learning Zone has been carefully developed by a collaboration of Education Consultants, Secondary School Teachers, Transition Year Coordinators as well as a number of public institutions and archives including; The National Library of Ireland, The Crawford Gallery in Cork, The Cork City and County Archives and the Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses and Estates (CSHIHE) at NUI Maynooth. This project was funded with a grant of €28,000 from The Heritage Council.

About Irish Heritage Trust

The Irish Heritage Trust is a new charity set up in July 2006 with the aim of acquiring historic properties, houses and gardens that will be open for everyone's enjoyment forever. These historic properties have the potential of bringing benefits to their local communities through tourism, employment or simply by providing a place for pleasure and relaxation.

www.fotalearningzone.ie

www.fotahouse.com

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