

For immediate release:

Island site of St Patrick's first Irish Monastery to join annual 'Global Greening'

2016 marks the first time 'Going Green for St Patrick's Day' truly goes back to its origins.

St Patrick's Island, situated in St Patrick's Bay off the coast of Skerries, Co Dublin, Ireland, is the site of **St Patrick's first Irish Monastery, dating back to 432 AD.**

Almost 1600 years later, these monastic ruins on St Patrick's Island are to be illuminated in brilliant green like the White House, Sydney Opera House, Taj Mahal and other landmarks across the world!

Many Irish legends are associated with St Patrick, but Dublin's beautiful seaside village of Skerries can claim authenticity over most, including:

- Site of St Patrick's first Irish Monastery
- St Patrick's Footprint, indelibly marked in the rocks on Skerries' shore
- St Patrick's saintly image silhouetted in the ruins on St Patrick's Island (images attached)

Skerries Legend of St Patrick and the Goat

The 7th Century writer Tírechán wrote that Inishpatrick off Skerries was the first place St Patrick set foot on his return to Ireland as a missionary. Legend has it, he arrived accompanied by a goat which provided milk. From this island St Patrick would come to the mainland to convert the people.

Once, while the saint was ashore, the people of Skerries visited the island and stole his goat. They killed, cooked and feasted on it. When the Saint returned to find his goat missing, he was so furious that in two giant strides he reached the mainland, leaving the clear imprint of his footstep in the bare rock where it can be seen today.

St Patrick confronted the people, who tried to deny their misdeed, but found they could only bleat like goats, as the beast cried from their bellies. Only when they told the truth did their voices return.

Skerries townsfolk, known as 'Goats' to this day, made amends 1600 years later with a ceremony placing a plaque on St Patrick's Church on the town's main street. On it is carved the image of a goat and the words in Latin: 'That which was taken has been returned, in the name of fellowship'.

Families still visit St Patrick's Footprint in the rocks of Skerries, where there is a tradition of making a secret wish when putting three fingers, the sign of the Shamrock, into the water in the footprint, all just in sight of the ruined monastery of St Patrick, in which his saintly outline still watches over all.

Notes to editors:

Skerries, Co Dublin, Ireland, is a beautiful multi-award-winning coastal village just 30 minutes from Dublin city, known for its beautiful beaches and scenic archipelago of five islands; its vibrant bar scene and stunning sunsets over water; water sports and restaurant culture (seafood a speciality)

Gold Medal and Midlands East Regional Award, Tidy Towns 2015; Irish Times Best Places in Ireland to Live #2; Listed in Top 10 Best Beaches in Ireland 2015; RTE Community of the Year Award 2011.

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******EXTRA!******

Over 50 International Media with a reach of 90m to visit Skerries as part of a Failte Ireland arranged visit

Fáilte Ireland will host over 50 international media in Dublin this week as they arrive to get a first-hand experience of the St Patrick's Festival and enjoy the sights and sounds of Dublin, and Skerries is top of their list!

The familiarisation trip, arranged in conjunction with Tourism Ireland, allows Fáilte Ireland reach a potential audience of over 90 million worldwide across print, broadcast, online and social media as they seek to showcase the city and county's new brand, Dublin – A Breath of Fresh Air.

In Skerries, these delegates will visit historic Ardgillan Castle and unique Skerries Mills with its working windmills and watermill, then they will follow in the footsteps of St Patrick along the town's fascinating and engaging family culture trail 'St Patrick's Way, before enjoying top-class food and music in the town's thriving harbourside restaurant district.

Speaking in advance of the overseas media arriving, Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Paschal Donohoe TD said:

"St Patrick's Day is a great pitching platform for Ireland, attracting 112,000 overseas visitors, benefiting the economy by €73m and allowing us to provide a priceless shop window to the world. I am delighted to see, once again, that Fáilte Ireland is hosting such an influential group of media this year. Last year, coverage of the St Patrick's Festival reached an audience of over 300 million and hopes are to exceed this in 2016."

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