

Address of the Chairman of the Organising Committee for the 13th International Peat Congress

Welcome to Tullamore

It is with a combination of joy and relief that we on the Organising Committee arrive today to welcome you all to Tullamore. Joy that you are here and that the long labour is over: relief that we made it.

Of the many decisions made by the Organising Committee, I would like to highlight one here. As a contribution to a better environment we have decided not to publish the Proceedings in paper form, but in electronic format.

Along the road to Tullamore we were aware of Ireland's contribution to the literature of business – Murphy's Law, which states that 'if it can go wrong, it will'. Less well-known is the O'Toole Principle which states that 'Murphy's Law is too optimistic'.

These two laws were illustrated in a story told me by a Bord na Móna colleague. Two young Dublin men travelled to the Irish midlands and in one of the towns they robbed the Post Office. Making their getaway in the dark they stumbled out on to a Bord na Móna bog. Meanwhile, on the bog a locomotive driver was preparing to haul a rake (a train load of peat) into the power station. He heard a rap on the window, and when he opened the door one of the two asked 'Hey Mister is this train going to Dublin?' They made the trip to Dublin in a police van.

We in the Organising Committee have made many trips to the midlands, and might often have been tempted to raid a Post Office to try to fund the Congress, but in the end we have got here in spite of Murphy and O'Toole. We would like to thank most whole-heartedly our two principal sponsors Bord na Móna and the National Parks and Wildlife Service – Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, and all our sponsors, for their moral and financial support for the Congress. We would also like to thank all those who have worked so hard to make the Congress happen.

We would like to thank particularly our Prime Minister, Mr Brian Cowen T.D., for doing us the honour of opening the Congress.

The Congress is not just about knowledge. If it were we could simply publish the Proceedings. The Congress is about meeting and greeting, about discussing and arguing, about socialising, and about renewing old friendships and making new ones. It is about having a good time.

And so the Organising Committee concludes with the Tullamore Principle on Peatlands and Peat: *Enjoy yourselves.*

Donal Clarke
Chairman, Organising Committee