**22/09/20 ‘It’s Fun From Afar for Wainfest 2020 as this year’s programme is launched’**

There’s no stopping Wainfest, Donegal’s Arts and Book Festival for children as it launched its 24th programme of events with Cathaoirleach Rena Donaghey on Tuesday (22nd September).

This year’s festival is aptly named Fun From Afar whereby there is an extensive and exciting range of online events for children to participate in from the comfort of their own classrooms and homes.

Wainfest is curated each year by a vibrant team from Donegal County Council’s Culture Division, to provide quality, inclusive opportunities to inspire the young people of Donegal. This year’s festival takes place from 3rd – 11th October.

Speaking at the launch, Cathaoirleach Rena Donaghey expressed her delight with how “the Wainfest team have found a way to deliver a programme which complies with all public health advice without compromising on quality. This year’s festival is absolutely filled to the brim with fabulous events which I’m sure families and schools alike will thoroughly enjoy. The fact that the majority of events are online this year also ensures that everyone across the county can join in online and have Fun From Afar.”

Events such as the University of Wonder and Imagination, presented by Cahoots NI and the theatrical production of David Walliams’ Ratburger are just two examples of what’s in store for families. Outdoor events see the return of Oakfield Park’s *Harry Potter Experience*, and nature activities at Glenveagh, and a *Smart Phone Heritage Hunt* at Donegal County Museum. There are also opportunities for families to explore the great outdoors with RTÉ Mooney Goes Wild panellist, Éanna Ní Lamhna.

The schools programme is just as exciting with online sessions from authors such as Matt Oldfield, who wrote *Unbelievable Football*, Jonathan Meres of *World of Norm* fame. Local man John D. Ruddy will present a *Manny Man History and Drawing Workshop* and returning for his second year author and poet Paul Cookson will regale students with his funny rhymes.

Speaking about the festival, Wainfest co-ordinator Sinéad McLaughlin spoke about the key differences in the Wainfest 2020 programme. “We are very cognisant of the public health advice in place at the moment therefore, this year we will be sending an electronic copy of the brochure to all schools across Donegal rather than a physical copy. The brochure will also be readily available online at www.wainfest.ie.”

“Unfortunately we will not be having any events in our public libraries this year, which is disappointing as we will miss the excitement of it all. However, our online events will allow schools across the county equal access to all events.”

She concludes “We have worked hard over the past number of years to expand our family programme and this year is no different and it is very exciting. There is a combination of online and physical events which has something for everyone both mid-week and at weekends. We are delighted to continue to work with partners to provide an exciting family programme and they have been key to its success over the past number of years.”

We are grateful too to the Creative Ireland Programme and the Dormant Account Fund for their financial support in delivering Wainfest events again this year.”

The Wainfest 2020 programme is available online at www.wainfest.ie