

## The Insect Hotel Journey

It was late April 2024, when Athboy Community School received an invitation like no other; a project blending creativity, engineering and environmental care had landed in our lap. We had been asked to design and build a model insect hotel in the shape of Dublin Airport's iconic new control tower. The request came from Mr. Owen Tobin of Dublin Airport (DAA). It felt almost too good to be true, a chance for the students to put their skills to the test, leave their mark on a national landmark, and play a role in boosting biodiversity. The excitement was instant. There wasn't a moment to waste.



Work began immediately. Students James Cully, Daniel Moran, Joseph Reilly, Markus Brinovanas, Thomas Sweetman, Jack Duff, Devin Toner, Danilo Batista and teachers Anthony Sheridan, Richard Thomson and Andrew Kington gathered to brainstorm, sketching out their ideas for what the insect hotel should look like. From the curved lines that mimicked the control tower's sleek design to the nooks and crannies that would serve as the perfect shelter for pollinators, each part of the project reflected careful planning. The structure had to be functional—able to house insects like bees and ladybirds—while resembling the towering silhouette that overlooked Dublin's runways.

With guidance from Mr. Tobin materials were sourced from both the school and the airport itself. Wooden pallets, bamboo sticks, hay, and natural materials were carefully selected to ensure the insect hotel was eco-friendly and sustainable.



By the end of May, the project was complete. It stood tall, a unique blend of form and function, perfectly replicating the iconic shape of the control tower. The sense of accomplishment was palpable; it wasn't just a school project—it was something that would stand at the airport for years to come.



Early June, a lorry from Dublin Airport rolled up to the school to collect the finished masterpiece. Over the summer, airport staff positioned the insect hotel, ensuring it would be visible to thousands of travellers while being accessible to its insect inhabitants. The school's name was proudly displayed on the side, a testament to their hard work and community spirit.



Over the summer months the gardening staff at Dublin Airport worked hard to prepare and fit the insert hotel in place, establishing a beautiful wildflower meadow around the newly installed model control tower.



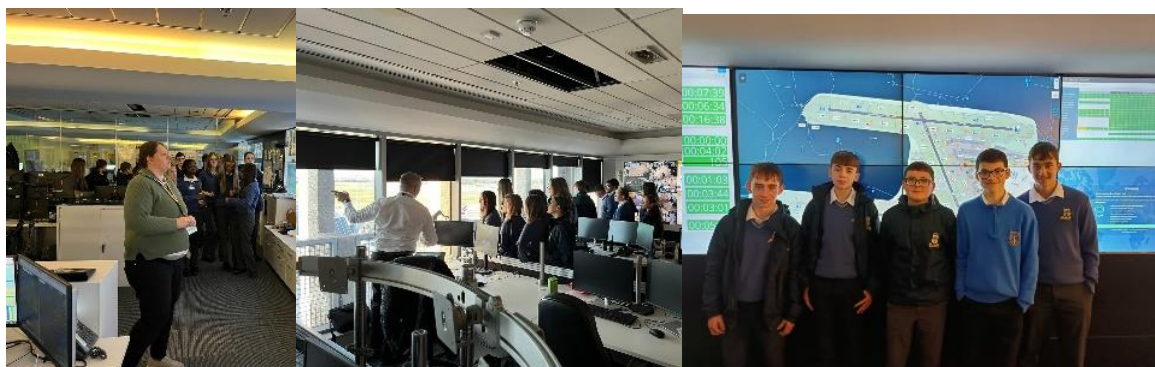
When the students returned to school in September, they were met with exciting news. Mr. Anthony Harris of Dublin Airport Operations had reached out through Mr. Tobin with a heartfelt thank-you for the time and effort put into the project. As a special gesture of gratitude, Mr. Harris extended a once-in-a-lifetime invitation to students: they would get a

behind-the-scenes tour of the airport, including a visit to the control tower—the very structure they had replicated for the insect hotel.

On Thursday the 10<sup>th</sup> October, a complimentary bus arrived to pick up the students. Excitement filled the air as they boarded, heading for Dublin Airport. Upon arrival, they were greeted warmly by airport staff, who guided them into the Airport for a safety briefing.



Students were taken behind the scenes of Dublin Airport's general operations. An explanation was given by control operations personal as to how they manage and ensure the smooth running of the airport from the vehicle traffic to human traffic coming and going about the airport.



Students then received an exclusive tour of the control tower, offering a bird's-eye view of the bustling airport below. The students were captivated, watching as planes landed and took off, understanding the complex operations that made it all possible.



On our return from the control tower at the airport, we were greeted by the gardening staff who worked hard to install the Insect Control Tower right outside Terminal One. The opportunity was taken to snap some group photos of all, but especially of those students who had worked on the project.



To top it all off, the group were treated to lunch, courtesy of the airport staff. The day ended with smiles and laughter as the students returned home, full of stories to share with family and friends. The experience was unforgettable—not just because of the exclusive tour, but because they had been part of something bigger. They had contributed to the environment, the airport, and their community in a lasting way. And every time they passed through Dublin Airport, they would be able to point to the insect hotel outside Terminal 1 and proudly say, "We built that!"

It was a journey that began with creativity and teamwork and ended with a deeper understanding of their place in both their community and the wider world.

