

Stargazers all set to flock to Beaghmore Stone Circles outside Cookstown



Beaghmore Stone Circle

Astronomy experts will be on hand to give advice at an exciting event to mark the much anticipated solar eclipse in Beaghmore.

Representatives from Armagh Observatory will be among those offering their specialised skills in stargazing during the Dark Skies event at the famous Stone Circles.

The event, which is free and open to all the family, takes place this Saturday from 6.30pm to 8.30pm, and is being hosted by Cookstown Council, in conjunction with Armagh Observatory.

Award winning sound artist and musician, Robert Jarvis, will perform on the evening, while a living history and archaeology presentation will be delivered by the Coalisland based Craic Theatre and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

A complimentary coach departs from the Burnavon in Cookstown at 6pm, with booking essential.

Funding for the “aroundNorth” music performance was made possible through the Beyond Borders programme of the PRS for Music Foundation, Creative Scotland, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, the Arts Council of Wales, and the Northern Ireland Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, which supports the Observatory’s programmes of research and education and public outreach in Armagh.

Beaghmore Stone Circles, which will be the setting for an event to mark the solar eclipse this weekend.

Mark Bailey, Director of the Observatory, explains: “The sonic-art composition was inspired by discussions between the artist and astronomers at Armagh, both of whom were seeking new ways to explain the stars above our heads, including the fact that they are always present even if we can’t see them owing to cloudy skies, light pollution or bright daylight. One of the Observatory’s research projects, led by astronomer Simon Jeffery, is to monitor on a nearly continuous basis the brightness of the stars rotating around Polaris, our familiar North Star — and so the idea for “aroundNorth” was born.”

As the Earth rotates on its axis, the stars appear to rotate around the pole star.

The installation tracks their movements and interprets them as an evocative musical score. As the stars cross imaginary lines in the sky, they trigger musical notes rather like the pins of a musical box, with sounds whose qualities are informed by the stars’ brightness, size, temperature and distance from Earth.

Places for the free event can be booked by telephoning Cookstown Visitor Information Centre on 028 8676 9949 or emailing tic@cookstown.gov.uk The eclipse - which is the biggest since August 1999 - will begin in the UK at 8.45am on Friday and peak at 9.31am.

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Some of the enthusiasts who converged on Beaghmore last Wednesday afternoon for the Stargazing Live Universe Awareness activities.