

**Press Release**  
**28<sup>th</sup> February 2018**



## **Game of Thrones Star Liam Cunningham To Lead This Year's St. Patrick's Festival Parade**

Dublin star of the stage and screen Liam Cunningham has been selected by St. Patrick's Festival to lead this year's *Festival Parade* which will wind its way through the streets of the capital from 12 noon on March 17<sup>th</sup>. The East Wall native was chosen in recognition of his outstanding contribution to Irish acting both at home and internationally.

Cunningham, one of Ireland's most recognisable actors, is probably best known for his starring role as Davos Seaworth in HBO epic fantasy series *Game of Thrones* which has garnered a millions of fans across the world. His debut film role was in Irish classic *Into The West* where he played a police officer and since then he has gone on to star in movies such as *War of the Buttons*, *Falling for a Dancer*, *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, *Clash of the Titans*, *The Guard* and *Hunger*. His accomplishments on the small screen include *Doctor Who*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Merlin* and *Titanic: Blood and Steel*.

His role as Father Dominic Moran in *Hunger* saw him nominated for the London Film Critics' Circle Award and the British Independent Film Award; this February he won an Irish Film & Television Award for his role in *Game of Thrones* and has previously won two Best Supporting Actor IFTAs for his roles in *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* and *Hunger*; and shared a BAFTA with Michael Fassbender for their crime-drama short film *Pitch Black Heist*. He has also been nominated alongside his *Game of Thrones* cast-members for the Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Drama Series.

Cunningham joins the illustrious ranks of previous Grand Marshals such as Annalise Murphy, Joanne O'Riordan, Katie Taylor, Ronnie Drew, Mícheál ó Muircheartaigh and Packie Bonner to name but a few.

Ardmhéara Bhaile Átha Cliath / Lord Mayor of Dublin, Mícheál Mac Donncha said "I would like to congratulate Liam on the honour of being selected as the 2018 Grand Marshal and wish him every enjoyment leading the Festival Parade. He is a fantastic ambassador for Irish acting who I'm sure many young people here look up to and hope to emulate his success."

On receiving the honour of Grand Marshal, Liam said "I have always been a proud Irishman and Dubliner and do my best to represent my country and city when I am abroad working. It's a huge honour to be invited back to lead the parade on our national holiday. I'm really looking forward to being a part of it."

A firm highlight of the celebrations, the ***Festival Parade*** taking place at 12 noon on March 17<sup>th</sup>, will weave its way through the heart of the capital city in a flourish of colour and flair. Community groups and pageant companies from all over Ireland will come together to celebrate the parade theme *Home Is Where the Heart Is* through a variety of performances and street theatre. This year will also see over 2,000 band members from far and wide deliver dazzling rhythms and uplifting music that will reverberate throughout the city's streets.

Susan Kirby, St. Patrick's Festival CEO commented "We're thrilled to announce Liam as the Grand Marshal for the 2018 St. Patrick's Festival Parade. He represents our country wonderfully on the world stage and with the theme for this year's Festival being *Home*, it's great to welcome him back to his home city to participate with us."

Fáilte Ireland's Head of Festivals, Ciara Sugrue said: "Fáilte Ireland continues to invest significantly in the St Patrick's Festival, an event which not only attracts tens of thousands of international visitors but also showcases Ireland as a fantastic tourist destination to global media. We are delighted to hear that Liam Cunningham has been selected as this year's Grand Marshal and we wish him all the best on the day. A Dublin native with an outstanding acting career both nationally and internationally, Liam will be a great representative of the Festival's artistic spirit and a well-known face to the many overseas spectators attending on the day."

*Home* is the theme of this year's Festival, which is funded by Fáilte Ireland, Dublin City Council and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

*The full programme of events for St. Patrick's Festival is available on*  
[www.stpatricksfestival.ie](http://www.stpatricksfestival.ie)

***Join the conversation online at #stpatricksfest***  
*facebook.com/StPatricksFestivalIreland, twitter.com/stpatricksfest,*  
*instagram.com/stpatricksfestival or YouTube/stpatricksfestvideos*

- Ends -

*For further information contact Sarah Corkery or Nigel Goggin at Conway Communications.*  
*Tel 087 783 4162 / 087 604 1161 / 01 661 9728*

## **NOTES TO EDITOR**

St. Patrick's Festival's principal funders are Fáilte Ireland, Dublin City Council and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Its aim is to develop a major annual international festival around the national holiday over which the Irish people can stand proud. The first St. Patrick's Festival was held over one day, and night, on March 17th 1996. Preparation used to take five months, but with its subsequent growth, it now takes 18 months to plan for Ireland's biggest annual celebration.

Over 105,000 out-of-state visitors attended the Festival in 2016, spending an average of 8.8 days in Ireland, and 6.5 days in Dublin. During the 2015 Festival, out-of-state visitors generated an estimated total expenditure of €73m while in Ireland, including expenditure of €51.3m while in Dublin, and circa €22m which was spent in the rest of Ireland. (Independent research conducted in 2015 & 2016 by Behaviour and Attitudes on behalf of Fáilte Ireland.)

### **Why was it started?**

- To offer a national festival that ranks as one of the greatest celebrations in the world
- To create energy and excitement throughout Ireland via innovation, creativity and grassroots involvement, and marketing activity
- To provide the opportunity and motivation for people of Irish descent (and those who sometimes wish they were Irish) to attend and join in the imaginative and expressive celebrations
- To project, internationally, an accurate image of Ireland as a creative, professional and sophisticated country with wide appeal.