



Eco-Schools Newsletter

Happy New Year and welcome to the Eco-Schools Northern Ireland January 2015 Newsletter. We hope that you all had a very Merry Christmas that you enjoyed a well-deserved break.

Book Now for Eco-Schools 20th Anniversary Celebration Event

Schools across Northern Ireland have received a hard copy of their personal invitation to the Eco-Schools 20th Anniversary Celebration Event, which will be held on Thursday 5th March 2015 at the Meadowbank Sports Arena, Magherafelt. We are pleased to confirm workshops and shows from, amongst others, Scientific Sue and BBC mentalist David Meade, and pupils will have the opportunity to take part in an official Guinness World Record[®] attempt.



Email-invitations are being sent out regularly through Eventbrite so please keep an eye on your inboxes for your invitation. We have opened up the number of tickets available per school. If you have already booked tickets and would like more or if you would like to book your free tickets please contact Eco-Schools on 02890 736 920 or cathy.gorman@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org.

We would like to thank the following organisations for their kind support of the Eco-Schools 20th Anniversary Event: SSE Airtricity, the principal sponsors of Eco-Schools in Northern Ireland and ambassador for the Energy topic; Cookstown Textile Recyclers, Eco-Schools waste topic sponsors; the Wrigley Company Foundation, Eco-Schools Litter topic sponsors; Translink, Eco-Schools Transport topic sponsors; and Trócaire, Eco-Schools Global Perspective topic sponsors. All our sponsors will be there on the day with displays, workshops and information on their products and services. If you would like more information on becoming an event sponsor please contact carmel.fyfe@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org.

Powerful Savings as schools take up Energy Challenge

More than 100 Eco-Schools from across Northern Ireland switched on to SSE Airtricity's 'Power Down Day' for the third year in a row, as part of the Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, World Days of Action initiative. Energy eco-warriors in schools all over the country monitored their electricity usage for a week in November 2014, patrolling classrooms and corridors, to make sure teachers and pupils were turning off lights, equipment wasn't being left on stand-by and doors and windows were shut to save heating.

Eco-Schools who took part, saved an impressive 20% average energy usage on the day, despite the weather being wet and windy. SSE Airtricity and Eco-Schools estimate that if all 1178 schools in Northern Ireland participated, there is a potential combined saving of around 40,000 KWH of energy, or around £6,000 in energy costs, in just one day through a few simple energy saving actions.

Following the launch of Power Down Day in 2012, more than 20% of schools from across Northern Ireland have participated in the annual energy saving day, which has seen more than 5300 KWH of electricity saved.



One school who did particularly well in this year's challenge was St Bride's Primary School in Belfast. With the school split across two locations the challenge was to coordinate and communicate throughout the whole school. The pupils did a brilliant job and decided to run the 'Power Down Day' for two weeks to compare the difference. Amazingly they saved 54% of their energy in week 1 and 56% in week 2.

Translink Travel Challenge

As the days lengthen and we look forward to warmer weather the time is ripe to think about the Translink Travel Challenge. The 2 week Challenge will help your school, pupils and parents to consider more environmentally friendly and healthy ways to travel to school sustainably – walk, bike, bus, train, scoot – it's all good! You can complete your Challenge on any date you chose as long as you submit the results by the deadline of 13th May 2015 which means your latest start date must be by Monday 27th April 2015. The Challenge can be done by one class, lots of classes, the whole school, a group of enthusiasts – whichever works best for your school – the more the merrier. There are also some great prizes to be won, everyone who takes part could win, and the built in travel survey will help you towards your Green Flag award. Register to receive an information pack and great resources with ruth.vanry@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org.



Cookstown Textile Recyclers - St Patrick's High School Keady raise 'Cash for Clobber'

The Eco-Committee at St Patrick's High School, Keady worked very hard to raise awareness of the school aim to Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and to get as many KS3 pupils as possible involved in the '[Cash for Clobber](#)' Scheme run by Cookstown Textile Recyclers. The Eco-Committee raised awareness of the importance of the scheme at a 'Cash for Clobber' assembly. The daily bulletin and school website were also used to inform pupils and staff of the success of the scheme. Lots of the pupils travel by bus and still managed to bring in a bag of clothing which is great.



Congratulations to the school for collecting 320 kilos of clothing and raising £160 for school funds.

Northern Ireland Carrier Bag Levy – Bring your own Bag!

Plastic bags pose a significant environmental and waste problem. The good news is that since the introduction of the bag levy of 5p in 2013, the usage of these bags has dropped a staggering 72% from 300 million to 84 million! However, we are still using a very high number of reusable bags, currently exempt from the levy because they are reusable. Even worse, many of us are buying these with the intention of reusing them but then fail to do so, perhaps forgetting them at home or in the boot of the car. From 19 January 2015, retailers must add the 5p levy to all carrier bags with a retail price below 20p - whether single use or reusable. This will increase the overall cost of cheap reusable bags and encourage shoppers to reuse these bags on a frequent basis.

For further information about the Carrier Bag Levy call 0300 200 7879 or go to www.nidirect.gov.uk/baglevy ...and remember – Always Bring Your Own Bag!

Delivery Partner Update

We have a number of delivery partners who can help schools with the topics, either by visiting their schools or by providing the necessary resources. The full list of [delivery partners](#) can be found on the Eco-Schools Website.

The Wheelie Big Challenge



Eco-Schools and Belfast City Council are delighted to launch a new, fun, waste themed, project and competition called the Wheelie Big Challenge for schools in Belfast City Council.

Wheelie's challenge is action based and the competition will be judged not just on the amount of waste reduction but also on the actions taken and campaign run in the school and at home to reduce waste. Shortlisted entries will be invited to Belfast City Hall in June to present a final display outlining their waste actions. The closing date for competition entries is **8th May 2015**.

Prizes for Primary and Post Primary School are:

First Place - £500

Second Place - £300

Third Place - £200

The Challenge is based around 4 key areas: Wheelie's Workshop, Wheelie Big School Audit, Wheelie Big Competition and Wheelie Big Celebration.

Please see our website for more information on the [Wheelie Big Challenge](#).

RSPB Big Schools' Birdwatch

[Big Schools' Birdwatch](#) is a simple educational activity that gets you and your class closer to the birds visiting your school grounds.

The Birdwatch helps you achieve your Biodiversity Eco-Schools topic, by giving you a survey activity that helps find out more about the nature around your school.

The Birdwatch takes just one hour, and can be carried out at any point between 5 January and 13 February 2015 – that's the entire first half of the spring term. Every school or group that submits their results before the 20 February will be sent a certificate and free personalised minibeast poster as a thank you for taking part. The website also has resources like an Assembly Presentation, games, curriculum links and ways to analyse the data you gather (www.rspb.org.uk/schoolswatch).

The Big Schools' Birdwatch works across a wide age and ability range. There's plenty of flexibility to run it as simply as you like: as the centrepiece of cross-curricular studies, project work, or as part of work to improve your school grounds. By taking part you'll also be providing RSPB with data on how well some of our most familiar birds are faring, as well as helping to give nature a home at your school.

There are specially designed resources for the under-fives, the 5 – 11s, and for 11 and older, all of which can be found on the resources page (link from www.rspb.org.uk/schoolswatch).

Northern Ireland Water Competition

Key Stage Two Reservoir Safety Poster Competition

Northern Ireland Water would like to invite your school to participate in [Northern Ireland Water's \(NI Water\) Annual Schools Competition](#).

The competition will focus on designing a poster to promote safety around reservoirs highlighting the dangers they can present.

The competition is open to KS2 pupils in all primary schools in Northern Ireland, with a category for Special Needs Schools.

Prize money for the winning schools:-

Primary schools in each age category, P5, P6 and P7:

First prize- £400, Second prize- £200, Third place- £100

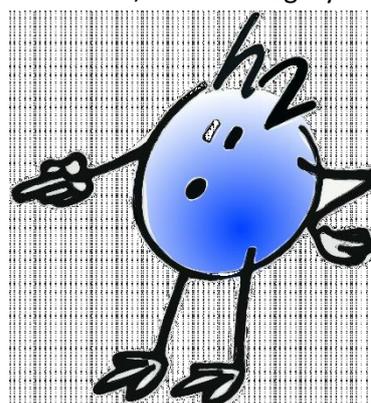
Special Needs category:

First prize- £400, Second prize- £200, Third place- £100

Each winning pupil will receive a "goody bag" and certificate and will be invited to an awards ceremony at NI Water's Wastewater Heritage Centre, Belfast in June 2015.

For a full list of competition instructions, please follow this [link](#).

The entry deadline is **Friday 27th March 2015**.



Habitat NI welcomes Spa Primary School pupils to ReStore

The Habitat NI ReStore in Lisburn was a hive of activity last month when Primary 6 pupils from Spa Primary School paid a visit to take part in Habitat's new Primary School Programme, 'Our Waste Our World.'

Habitat NI is delighted to be a new Eco Schools delivery partner and offers an exciting new programme to primary schools. Primarily targeted at Key Stage 2 pupils, 'Our Waste Our World' enables pupils to explore sustainable living through creative, interactive and action-packed learning, with curriculum linked activities and resources.



Pupils from Spa Primary took part in a 2 ½ workshop at the Habitat ReStore, examining issues around waste, sustainability and the environment from a local and global perspective. The pupils had the opportunity to see first-hand how Habitat is diverting waste from landfill and how the smallest of changes in their everyday life at home and school can make a big difference in helping the environment.

The workshop finished with pupils experiencing what life would be like to live in a 'shack' and a replica Ethiopian home. Spa Primary 6 teacher Ms Anderson said, "The programme was great, it really made everything I had been doing in class with the pupils come to life. The kids have gained an understanding of how privileged they are, and hopefully been inspired to help others out."



The pupils were also challenged to become active citizens and do something which would raise funds for Habitat NI, reduce waste and have a life-changing impact somewhere else in the world. Pupils from Spa Primary 6 have raised a fantastic £400 which will help to pay for proper toilets for four families in the developing world. Access to proper sanitation ensures families can stay clean, healthy and dignified.

Habitat NI is encouraging primary schools across NI to get involved in 'Our Waste Our World' in 2015. For more information or to register a class please [click here](#), call Karen Dunlop on 028 92 635 639 or email karend@habitatni.co.uk.

Environmental Youth Speak



2014 EYS Winners with David Meade

Details of “Environmental Youth Speak Competition 2015” were announced on 11th December 2014.

The competition has been running successfully for over 17 years and is organised by the three NI Waste Management Groups. Almost all local Councils participate making Environmental Youth Speak a truly Province-wide event. The competition begins at Council level, progresses to Regional level and culminates in the crowning of two Northern Ireland Champions.

Top Prize : £500 voucher for winning school in each category, £50 for winning pupil + other goodies!
This year's topics are:

Junior Section (For P6 and P7 pupils)

A day in the life of a Waste Super Hero (solo entries only)

Senior Section (For Yr 8, Yr 9 & Yr 10 pupils)

Food glorious food, why waste it? (Solo and duet entries permitted)

For further information and to download an application form, please go to

<http://www.rethinkwasteni.org/eyes>

The closing date for entries is Friday 30th January 2015.

Local Council heats will take place during **February 2015**. Please contact your local council's Waste Management officer for details. **The Grand final of the 2015** event will be held on **Tuesday 10th March 2015** at the Island Civic Centre, Lisburn, BT27 4RL.

Sustrans Big Pedal



The UK's largest inter-school cycling and scooting competition, The Big Pedal, is open to nurseries, primary and secondary schools and challenges them to compete against one another by making the most journeys to school by bike and scooter over 15 days from March 2nd to 20th 2015. Last year over 1,520 schools signed up to take part, and teachers, parents, siblings and pupils made over a million journeys (1,142,374) to school on their bikes and scooters. By signing up to The Big Pedal schools will receive a wall-chart to record their progress, whilst a range of resources designed to support schools are available in the teachers section of the Sustrans website. Winning schools will receive prizes including bike and scooter stunt shows and equipment.

To register your school go to: www.bigpedal.org.uk



Cluster Group Meetings

Belfast City Council

Eco-Schools and Belfast City Council are holding a ‘Going for Awards’ Cluster Group meeting from 3 – 5pm on **21st January 2015** at Belfast Castle. The meeting is designed to give practical advice on applying for the Eco-Schools awards and assist schools in the Belfast area through the Eco-Schools programme. If you are in Belfast City Council area or are moving into the new Belfast City Council area in April 2015, we would be delighted for you to attend. To reserve a place, please contact Joanna McDonnell, Tel: 028 9073 6920 or Email: joanna.mcdonnell@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org.

Limavady Borough Council is organising a Cluster Group meeting on **22nd January 2015** in the Council Offices in Limavady. This meeting is designed to assist schools in the Limavady area through the Eco-Schools programme. The meeting will focus on offering practical advice to achieve Eco-Schools awards as well as news on projects, competitions and resources available. There will also be an opportunity for schools to share ideas about their Green Flag experiences.

Down District Council is hosting a Cluster Group meeting in their Council Offices on **29th January 2015** at 2.30pm. There will be a question and answers session and an opportunity to chat to a member of the Eco-Schools team.

Banbridge District Council is hosting a Cluster Group meeting on **10th February 2015** at Dromore Nursery School at 3pm. There will be a member of the Eco-Schools team will be there to answer any queries you have about the Eco-Schools Programme.

Green Flag Awards

Well done to the following schools on achieving the Eco-Schools Green Flag in December 2014:

- McClintock Primary School, Omagh
- Millington Primary School, Portadown
- Drumcree College, Portadown



We are continually amazed at the knowledge and enthusiasm of all the pupils and staff at our Green Flag schools and they are to be congratulated on their fantastic achievement.

Education for Change Award for Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School



Congratulations to Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School for winning a Brighter Belfast Environmental Award in the Education for Change category.

Pictured are teachers Conor McQuaid and Victoria Jennings and parent Caroline McCrea who picked up the Education for Change award for Our Lady of Lourdes.

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