

BE SUSTAINABLE NEWSLETTER

September 2023 Edition
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The Sustainability Newsletter for
Newry, Mourne and Down District Schools

"You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you.
What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of a difference you want to make."
Jane Goodhall

Welcome to our annual Schools'

Besustainable Newsletter highlighting some of the Council run environmental competitions and activities that schools in our district took part in during the 2022- 2023 academic year.

SCHOOLS' POSTER COMPETITION

The Sustainability Section's popular annual schools' poster competition held in October each year attracted entries from 56 primary schools and 10 secondary schools in the district.



Six entries were selected as winners in the competition each winning a framed copy of their poster and a voucher. All six winners are pictured with the Chairperson of Council Councillor Michael Savage.

With the slogan "**Don't Be Bitter. Pick Up Your Litter**" the junior winner highlighted a simple action we all can take to help the environment, not dropping litter in the first place!

The senior winner's slogan "**Wake Up!! Earth's Clock is Ticking. Alarm Bells are Ringing**" reflected on the very urgent need to address the damage we are doing to the environment.

As part of the prize the winning junior entry by **Jessica** from **Annsborough Integrated Primary School**, and the winning senior entry by **Kara** from **St Louis Grammar School, Kilkeel**, featured on billboards in Newry City and Downpatrick in February and March 2023.



Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne and Down
District Council



We intend to run the poster competition again during the first term of the 2023 -24 academic year. Schools will be contacted in September with details. Taking part in this competition is ideal for inclusion in your Eco-Schools' action plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL YOUTH SPEAK COMPETITION 2023

In recent years this competition had been moved online and while that served its purpose in difficult circumstances, enabling the annual competition to continue, there is nothing better than an "in person" final.

So, this year we decided to hold a hybrid competition where schools posted their pupil's speech on their web site or social media page, and a number were then selected to take part in a live Final.



This year's topics were **"By 2050 there will be more plastic in the sea than fish. Let's stop marine plastic pollution before it's too late"** for the Primary School

section, while Secondary schools were asked to speak on **"How can living sustainably help to ease the cost-of-living crisis"**.



Members of the Sustainability team viewed the speeches remotely - which was a big task as thirty-six primary schools and eight secondary schools had registered to take part!

Nine Primary pupils and three Secondary pupils were eventually selected to reprise their speeches at the Final which was held in Newcastle Community Cinema.

In what turned out to be a hotly contested Final the judges chose **Eva McKeown** from **St Moninna's Primary School, Cloughogue**, as this year's junior winner and **Eamonn Murray** from **St Patrick's Grammar School, Downpatrick** as the senior winner.



Runners-up in the junior section were Éilis Donnelly from Annsborough Integrated Primary School and Ramona Hamill-Davison from Sacred Heart Primary School, Dundrum.

Runners up in the senior section were Emma Welch from Blackwater Integrated College, Downpatrick and Hannah Murney from St Louis Grammar School, Kilkeel.

Highly commended in the junior section were Adhrán McCartney, St Bronagh's Primary School, Rostrevor; James McMorow, Holy Cross Primary School, Atticall and Louisa Gribben, St Paul's Primary School, Cabra.

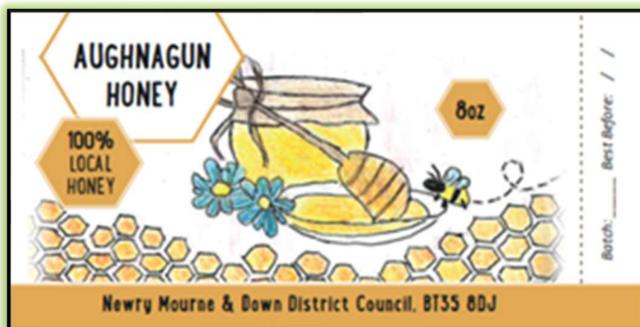
AUGHNAGUN HONEY SCHOOLS' LABEL DESIGN COMPETITION

Who would have thought that a simple request by a local beekeeper to locate some beehives on the Council's old landfill site at Aughnagun would result in a feature on BBC's flagship teatime programme "The One Show"?

Biodiversity Officer Danielle Begley met with Billy Campbell, a member of the County Louth Beekeeper Association, to see whether the request could be progressed. The group is a cross border group working to help conserve the native Irish black honeybee. Danielle was successful in obtaining permission for Aughnagun to be the beehives' new home and the first honey was harvested from the hives in July 2022.

BBC NI Newline first featured the story on their online site and shortly after the story appeared on The One Show bringing this good news story from the Newry, Mourne and Down district to a national audience.

At the request of the Chairperson a competition was held for schools in the vicinity of the landfill site to design the label to be used on next year's honey jars. Some excellent designs were submitted, and the overall winner was **Leah** from **St Dallan's Primary School, Warrenpoint.**



Leah's design was reimagined by a graphic designer to create the label that will now feature on all future jars of Aughnagun honey.

Leah is pictured with the first batch of honey produced bearing her label design.



EDUCATING PUPILS ABOUT BEES

County Louth Beekeeper Association visited several schools to show pupils what an important role bees play in the environment.

Pupils from St Clare's Abbey Primary School, Newry, who were lucky enough to get a visit from Billy of the County Louth Beekeeper Association, learned about pollination and the importance of bees to our ecosystem. Billy brought along a glass fronted demonstration hive which showed the pupils the inner workings of a beehive. Pupils had lots of interesting questions for Billy who was more than happy to answer them from his vast knowledge of beekeeping.



AWARD WINNING PROJECT



"The Bees of Aughnagun" project was also shortlisted in the Environmental Services section of the prestigious LGC (Local Government Chronicle) Awards.

To the great delight of all involved the project scooped the award on the night at the ceremony held in London. The judges feedback commented that the project was unique with "local eco-warriors" conserving "the Irish black bee species for the planet and reclaiming an ex-landfill site to improve biodiversity".



FAIRTRADE 2023

Did you know that Newry, Mourne and Down is a Fairtrade District?

The Council is a member of the local Fairtrade steering committee. The committee has worked since 2008, when Newry City first received fairtrade status, to raise awareness of what Fairtrade is and encourage citizens to think about choosing Fairtrade products while shopping.

Fairtrade Fortnight took place for two weeks in February and March 2023.

Products bearing the Fairtrade logo are available in many shops in our district. When you choose to buy a Fairtrade certified product you can be assured that not only is it fairly produced but that farmers who produced it have received a fair price plus a premium which they use to invest in their communities.

Find out more about how Fairtrade helps them here: <https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/farmers-and-workers/>

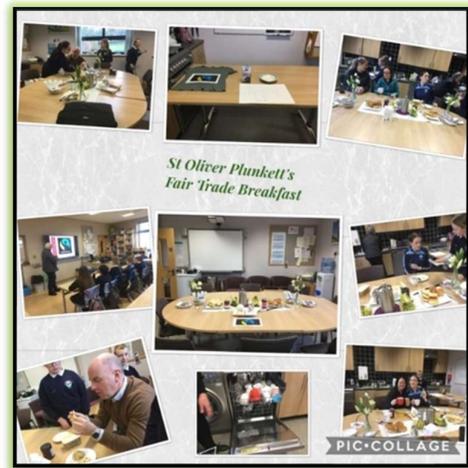
During Fairtrade Fortnight our Chairperson lit up Newry Town Hall and Downpatrick Leisure Centre in the blue and green colours of the Fairtrade logo.

Many schools learn about Fairtrade as part of their Eco-Schools work. The Sustainability section visited two local schools during the fortnight to give them a talk on Fairtrade and where our food comes from.

St Brigid's Primary School, Drumilly had made pottery versions of the Fairtrade logo as part of their study of the Fairtrade topic.



Pupils at **St Oliver Plunkett's Primary School, Forkhill** even held a Fairtrade breakfast morning in the staff room for their teachers!



For more information visit:

www.fairtrade.org.uk or www.fairtrade.ie

<http://schools.fairtrade.org.uk/>



ACTIVE TRAVEL

The Sustainability Section was delighted to be able to secure funding for five "one day" cycle training sessions and offer them free to local schools as part of its Active Travel promotions. The sessions were provided on behalf of the Council by SustransNI.



Participating schools in 2023 were:

- Glasswater Primary School
- St Mary's Primary School, Dunsford
- Holy Cross Primary School, Atticall
- Killowen Primary School
- Killyleagh Integrated Primary School.

Chairperson of Council Councillor Michael Savage visited Killowen Primary School to see for himself one of the sessions in progress.

Councillor Savage said, **"As part of our Active Travel Masterplan our aim is to encourage our residents to take more journeys by walking and cycling, including where possible, the journey to school. It was an honour for me to see at first hand the enthusiasm of the pupils and their teacher, Mrs Asimwe, as they took part in the session today"**.

Pictured are Primary Seven Pupils from Killowen Primary School, Chairperson Councillor Michael Savage, teacher AnnMarie Assimwe and Cycle Instructor Diane Whyte.

ECO SCHOOLS GREEN FLAG AWARDS 2023

Teachers and pupils from across the Council district were recognised for their standout environmental work at this year's Eco-Schools Green Flag Awards. Twenty-five local schools received Green Flags with special recognition for the Eco-Teacher, Eco-School, and Eco-Pupil of the Year. The awards were hosted by the Council and Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful and supported by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Nexus.



The 2023 Green Flag Recipients were:

- Cortamlet Primary School,
- Dromore Road Primary School
- Grange Primary School
- Holy Cross Primary School
- Our Lady's Grammar School
- St Colmcille's Nursery School
- St Mary's Primary School Barr
- St Mary's Primary School Dunsford
- St Nicholas Primary School
- St Patrick's Primary School Newry
- All Children's Integrated Primary School
- Ashgrove Nursery School Newry
- Cumran Primary School
- Down High School
- Killeen Primary School
- Our Lady and St Patrick Primary School
- St Brigid's Primary School Drumilly
- St Columban's Primary School
- St Joseph's Convent Primary School Newry
- St Joseph's Primary School Carnacaville
- St Laurence O'Toole's Primary School
- St Ronan's Primary School
- St. Brigid's Primary School Glasdrummond
- Downpatrick Primary School
- St Paul's Primary School Cabra



Three special awards were presented on the day:

ECO-TEACHER OF THE YEAR: Nadine Crozier Sacred Heart PS, Dundrum



ECO-PUPIL OF THE YEAR: Logan Gray, Sacred Heart PS, Dundrum



ECO-SCHOOL OF THE YEAR: St. Joseph's Convent Primary School, Newry.



Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor Valerie Harte, who attended the awards presentation event at The Saint Patrick Centre in Downpatrick said,

"It has been inspiring to see the vision and passion children across the district have for the environment and to learn more about their ideas".

"Newry, Mourne and Down District Council has been a long-time supporter of the Eco-Schools programme and is delighted to have hosted this wonderful celebration event recognising our schools' award-winning environmental work."

Sinead Murray, Environmental Education Coordinator at Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful said,

"This year we have been really impressed by the quality of applications from schools across the council area. Pupils and teachers have really stepped up and get the importance of taking concrete action against the climate emergency. The creativity and determination displayed by pupils can give all of us confidence in the future. We are delighted to see the ethos of the Eco-Schools programme so warmly embraced by so many schools."

The eco-committees from St Brigid's Primary School, Drumilly and St Mary's Primary School, Barr, pictured below, although not able to attend the event on the day sent us these lovely photos of their pupils receiving their green flags!



Well done to the twenty-two schools in the district who renewed their flag and the three schools who received their first flag this year.

TEACHERS' COMPETITION TIME



Congratulations to our competition winner in the last edition. **Kate Austin** of **St Patrick's Primary School, Hilltown** won our bamboo lunchbox and reusable metal drinks bottle. For this edition's competition we have a **Bird Feeder Pack**

up for grabs! (Suitable for Primary School only). An ideal gift for your eco committee or class to use to attract more birds to your school grounds.



To be in with a chance of winning it for your school answer the following question.

The two birds pictured below might visit your school's bird feeder.



Can you name them? Are they:

- a) HOUSEMARTIN, CHAFFINCH
- b) BLUE TIT, GREENFINCH
- c) BLUE TIT, CHAFFINCH

Send your answer a, b or c to besustainable@nmandd.org putting "Bird Feeder Competition" in subject box. One entry per school only.

Winner will be chosen at random from all correct entries received by closing date of **Friday 15 September 2023**. **Good Luck!**

Visit the RSPBNI's education page at <https://www.rspb.org.uk/about-the-rspb/at-home-and-abroad/northern-ireland/educationinnorthernireland/>



for information about the support they can offer schools, including outreach visits, resources for teachers and their annual Big Schools' Bird Watch.

PLASTIC, NOT SO FANTASTIC!

'Single-use' was named as Collins Dictionary's word of the year in 2018. Broadly speaking, single-use plastic is a term which can refer to any plastic items which are either designed to be used for one time by the consumer before they are thrown away or recycled, or likely to be used in this way. Such items include disposable cutlery, plastic straws, plastic carrier bags, drink stirrers, drinks bottles and crisp packets.



New laws aimed at reducing the impact of a range of Single Use Plastics (SUPs) come into law shortly in England, but in Northern Ireland, apart from the plastic bag levy, no laws exist yet and action to reduce SUPs remains voluntary.

While we wait for the progress locally of legislation on the reduction of more single use plastic items, there is still a lot that can be done, and schools can help take the lead.

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful has developed a **Schools' Tackling Plastics** guide which can be viewed here:

<https://www.keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org/cgi-bin/generic?instanceID=65>

As well as other useful information you can download a copy of their **"How to remove pointless plastics from your school"** resource.



Know your plastics: there are many different types of plastics used in the single use products we buy every day.

One of the most common is **Polyethylene terephthalate** or **PET** which is used to make single use plastic drinks bottles.



Check any plastic drinks bottle to see if you can locate the letters PET and / or the recycle symbol, known as the mobius loop, with a number 1 inside.

Plastic drinks bottles made from PET can be placed in your blue wheelie bin for recycling. They can be made into new plastic bottles and even recycled to make polyester. Just make sure you empty the bottle of all liquid first and don't forget to squash it to make more space in your blue bin!

However, it's always the best option not to buy a single use plastic bottle in the first place and

simply use a refillable water bottle instead.

NIWater say that **"340 million plastic bottles a year would be saved if just 1 in 10 of us refilled just once a week!"** Learn more about NIWater's **Refillution** campaign at:



www.niwater.com/refillution/

Look out for new waterfountains in our parks and public spaces. To date 8 Fountains have been installed at Cranfield Beach, Newcastle Promenade, Delamont Country Park, Warrenpoint Municipal Park, the Annalong, Ardglass and Killeel Harbour areas as well as Hill Street Newry.



Pictured are the new "Refill Station" waterfountains recently erected in Ardglass Harbour and Newcastle Promenade, County Down.

Further Fountains are planned which, as well as providing fresh drinking water refills, will also raise awareness of single use plastics, marine plastic pollution and litter.

When you consider that **Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful's Marine Litter Report 2021** revealed that **81%** of litter collected on our beaches was plastic, removing single use plastics bottles from your school is a simple step your school can take to improve its environmental performance.

Why not take inspiration from Eva's speech, from St Monnina's Primary School Cloughoge, who was the junior winner of the 2023 Environmental Youth Speak competition.

The topic was **"By 2050 there will be more plastic in the sea than fish. Let's stop marine plastic pollution before it's too late."**

<https://www.cloughogepriamaryschool.com/news/environmental-youth-speak/?P=4&>



There are lots of other types of plastic bottles, such as detergent bottles and containers and most of these can also be recycled in your blue wheelie bin.

 Watch recyclenow's video for guidance on recycling plastic items:
<https://youtu.be/niTGHEp5yLw>

Or visit the Council's web site to see all the items, including plastic, that you can recycle in your blue wheelie bin:



<https://www.newrymouredown.org/blue-green-bin>

Make a plastic promise!

If you haven't already done so make a plastic promise, as an individual or for your school, and help put an end to throwaway plastics!



<https://www.livehereandlovehere.org/cgi-bin/PlasticPromise>

ENVIRONMENTAL TALKS & COMPETITIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL TALKS



There are many organisations who can provide school talks on a range of environmental topics.

ECO-SCHOOLS PARTNERS

The Eco-SchoolsNI web site lists partners who provide talks, based on the programme's eleven eco-schools topics, at the following link:

<https://www.eco-schoolsni.org/cgi-bin/partners>

Some of the listed partner organisations will charge and some may do school visits free of charge.

COUNCIL'S SUSTAINABILITY SECTION



The Council's Sustainability Section can visit your school / class. These visits are free of charge, suitable for KS2/3.

Email besustainable@nmandd.org with your request well in advance, outlining topic interested in and class/target age group. If we cannot provide a talk on your interested topic, we may be able to signpost you to an organisation who can.

ARC21



www.arc21.org.uk

arc21 is the umbrella Waste Management Group for 6 Councils in the eastern part of Northern Ireland.

Noel Lyons, the arc21 Waste Promotions Officer, can visit schools in the district on behalf of the Council. Noel's talks, which are free of charge and centred on waste and recycling, can be tailored to all key stages, and include crafts for primary level.

Bookings are dependent on his availability. Email Noel directly on noel.lyons@arc21.org.uk or contact him by mobile 07825147798 to enquire about a suitable date for a visit. Let him know that your school is in the Newry, Mourne and Down district. Available dates get booked up fast so the earlier you make contact the better. Bookings taken for up to June 2024

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPETITIONS

The Sustainability Section will run the Environmental Poster and Environmental Youth Speak competitions again this year.

All schools will be contacted with details by email to all eco teachers currently on our database and by letter to school Principals.

We may also email eco teachers with information that we feel



will be of interest to them in their environmental work, and from time-to-time with information about environmental competitions run by other organisations.

DATES TO NOTE

RSPB's Big Schools' Birdwatch. 6 January to 20 February 2024.

Compost Awareness Week. 5 May to 11 May 2024.

Fairtrade Fortnight. In 2024, to mark thirty years of the FAIRTRADE Mark, fairtrade fortnight will move from its traditional month of February to September - 9 September to 22 September 2024.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Listed are some useful environmental web sites that you may find helpful.

www.newrymournedown.org/sustainability

www.eco-schoolsni.org

www.keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org

www.liveherelovehere.org

www.lovefoodhatewaste.com

www.fairtrade.org.uk

www.fairtrade.ie

<http://schools.fairtrade.org.uk/>

<https://www.niwater.com/resources-for-schools/>

www.cvni.org

www.trocaire.org/our-work/educate/

<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/about-us/our-work-in-northern-ireland/>

www.rspb.org.uk/about-the-rspb/at-home-and-abroad/northern-ireland/

www.recyclenow.com/ni

www.pollinators.ie/schools

www.nidirect.gov.uk/travelwiseni

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

www.butterfly-conservation.org

www.wwf.org.uk

www.greenpeace.org.uk

Please note the Council is not responsible for content accessed through external web sites identified in this newsletter.

