

Eco-Schools Newsletter

Welcome to the Eco-Schools Northern Ireland February 2015 Newsletter. We hope that you have all settled back into the term and are hard at work on some fantastic Eco-Schools projects.

Celebrate Good Times – Come On!



The Eco-Schools team are really looking forward to celebrating 20 years of fantastic Eco-Schools work with schools in Northern Ireland at the 20th Anniversary Celebration Event, which will be held on **Thursday 5th March 2015 at the Meadowbank Sports Arena, Magherafelt**. With guests from over 150 schools already confirmed, we hope that you will book your tickets soon to avoid disappointment.



There will be lots of fun eco themed workshops, activities and exhibits including Scientific Sue and BBC mentalist David Meade, and pupils will have the opportunity to take part in an official Guinness World Record[®] attempt. We are also delighted to be joined by Eco-Schools Ambassador Frank Mitchell, U105 and UTV Presenter, who will comper the event. We are also pleased to welcome Daniel Schaffer, CEO and Brid Conneely, International Eco-Schools Director from the Foundation for Environmental Education to this special occasion.

Detailed information about the event will be going out to schools very soon – please keep an eye out for this as you might like to book in advance for some workshops. 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 Tel: 02890 736 920 or by email: 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; **Magherafelt District Council**; **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 who will all be joining us on the day.

We are also delighted to have Event sponsorship from:

- [ni4kids](http://ni4kids.com) the local media outlet which is full of information for parents of school-aged children, providing them with useful information on education, health, parenting, entertainment and fun things to do for all the family, whether in the home or out and about around Northern Ireland.

ni4kids.com

- [European Recycling Platform \(ERP\)](#) are actively involved in over 500 schools in Northern Ireland, providing free battery box kits, collections of used waste batteries and resources off their website. They also sponsor Environmental Youth speak and support Junk Kouture.



- [School Web Design](#) is a Northern Irish company creating unique, useful and easily managed school websites. Over 80 schools, from primary to secondary level have websites designed, built and supported by them.



- [Helping Hand Environmental](#) - Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful has selected Helping Hand Environmental as their official environmental partner of choice for 2015 and hopes that a strengthened working partnership with the UK's #1 Litter Clearance Hands Tools Company, will be successful as the environmental charity announces an exciting development to their relationship – and a bespoke Litterpicker! Schools can buy the new litter pickers as part of the official [Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful Order Form](#) in association with Helping Hand Environmental. The scheme enables schools to purchase litter clearance equipment and generate funds for Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful every time they quote KNIBGROUP when placing an order with Helping Hand Environmental.



All our sponsors will be there on the day with displays, workshops and information on their products and services. For more information on all our sponsors for the event, please follow this [link](#). The support of many of our Delivery Partners is also very much appreciated and we look forward to their displays and workshops at the event. Please see further details in our dedicated Delivery Partners section below.

Translink Travel Challenge

Spring is in the air and lots of schools have registered and are planning their 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.



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.

We are delighted to have the support of Magherafelt District Council and that so many of our Eco-Schools Delivery Partners are able to join us at the Eco-Schools 20th Anniversary Event on 5th March 2015. You can look forward to meeting the following:

- Ards Borough Council
- Ballinderry Rivers Trust
- Ballymena Borough Council
- Banbridge District Council
- Belfast City Council
- Bryson Energy
- Business in the Community - ARENA
- Craigavon Borough Council
- DOE
- Habitat NI
- Larne Borough Council
- Limavady Borough Council
- Magherafelt District Council
- North Down Borough Council
- Northern Ireland Water
- Omagh District Council
- RSPB
- Strabane District Council
- Sustrans
- The Wrigley Company
- Ulster Wildlife

The Wheelie Big Challenge – closing date 8th May



Eco-Schools and Belfast City Council are delighted to have launched 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**. Schools that register will also receive some free internal recycling bins and support from an Eco-Schools Project Officer for their Challenge.

George Lyttle, Waste Manager from Belfast City Council said: "We are pleased to be working with Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful Eco-Schools again on a schools competition, building on the success of the past few years. This competition gives schools the opportunity to win great prizes while helping to protect the environment and reduce waste disposal costs. Hopefully the pupils taking part will also encourage their families to use their recycling bins or boxes at home, which will help us meet the target of 50% recycling by 2020."

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 Big Schools' Birdwatch works across a wide age and ability range. There's plenty of flexibility to run it as simply as you like and 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.

The Birdwatch takes just one hour, and can be carried out at any point between **5th January and 13th February 2015**. 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).

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 – deadline 27th March 2015

Key Stage 2 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 and 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:

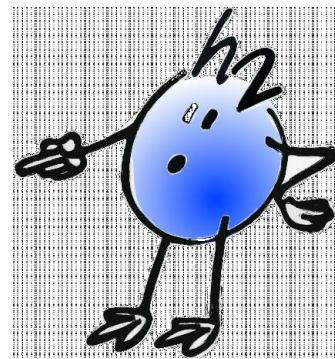
First prize- £400, Second prize- £200, Third place- £100

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](#).



OPAL is now in Northern Ireland!

OPAL Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) is a community-focused education and research programme about the environment. In early 2014, the Field Studies Council and the School of Education, Queens University Belfast became delivery partners for OPAL in Northern Ireland. The key focus in Northern Ireland is to encourage Key Stage 3 pupils to complete surveys in or near their school grounds. OPAL employees are available to support school pupils to carry out these surveys and upload the data onto the National database.

The survey topics include:

- Bugs count survey – which invertebrates are brave enough to live near human habitats?
- Tree Health Survey – carry out a tree health check; just what does tree disease look like?
- Biodiversity survey - just who eats what in your local hedgerows?
- Water survey – what lives in the local pond or stream and what does that tell us about water quality?
- Air survey – how clean is your air? Can you find any bio-indicators such as lichens or tar spots?
- Soil and earthworm survey – all you need to know about soil property and worm identification.



Fairview Primary School pupils participate in the Air Quality Survey in Ormeau Park Belfast

Northern Ireland Curriculum Links

- Scientific methods of enquiry – planning fieldwork, surveying, data recording and analysis;
- Creative/critical thinking and spiritual awareness – development of wonder at the natural environment;
- Develop a range of practical skills – spelling, numeracy, organisation and communication;
- Environment and human influences – understanding of how we affect the environment;
- Respect and cooperate with others – teamwork, organisation and cooperation;
- Cross-curricular skills – numeracy, literacy, scientific knowledge and ICT; and
- Thinking skills and personal capabilities – problem solving, working with others and managing information.

OPAL surveys are an excellent way of assessing water quality in local streams or ponds and how bio-diverse your school yard is and are a great way of working on the Water and Biodiversity topics for Eco-Schools. By completing yearly surveys you can monitor improvements in Biodiversity in your school yard or water quality in a local pond or stream. The surveys are free and can be downloaded from www.opalexplornature.com.

To find out more about OPAL in Northern Ireland and what supports they can offer, please contact: Gretta McCarron at School of Education, Queens University Belfast 028 9097 1496 email: g.mccarron@qub.ac.uk

Environmental Youth Speak

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

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.



2014 EYS Winners with David Meade

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

Eco-Schools and **Belfast City Council** held a 'Going for Awards' Cluster Group meeting on **21st January 2015** at Belfast Castle. The meeting, designed to give practical advice on applying for the Eco-Schools awards, proved to be a great success with 18 teachers and 12 pupils attending from local schools. Congratulations to 2 schools, Scoil na Fuisseoige and St Kieran's Primary School, that were able to gain awards on the day – one Bronze and one Silver.

Limavady Borough Council organised a Cluster Group meeting on **22nd January 2015** in the Council Offices in Limavady with 6 teachers attending from local schools. The meeting focused on offering practical advice to achieve Eco-Schools awards as well as news on projects, competitions and resources available. There was also an opportunity for schools to share ideas about their Green Flag experiences.

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 there to answer any queries you have about the Eco-Schools Programme. Please contact [Tracy Fitzpatrick](#) if your school would like to attend.

Green Flag Awards

Well done to the following schools on achieving the Eco-Schools Green Flag in January 2015:

- Holy Trinity College, Cookstown
- St Ronan's Primary School, Newry
- Oakfield Primary School, Carrickfergus
- Kilrea Primary School
- Matt Talbot Nursery School, Belfast
- Mullaglass Primary School, Newry

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.

Please note that **the deadline date for applications is 20th March 2015** if you want a guaranteed assessment before the end of the academic year.



A special message for you all the way from Australia!

G'day!

My name is Stacey. My job is to help schools in Australia to become Eco-Schools, just like you. In 2015, I'm helping Aussie schools to find an international partner school to work with.

If your school would like to take part, please send me an email to info@eco-schools.org.au and tell me:

- What do you think you could do together and when? (Don't forget there's a big time difference so we will have to write or email!)
- What region of Australia are you interested in? ([here's a map](#))
- Which students would be involved? Age group and group size?

I will then approach suitable schools here in Australia and link you up. I've heard that Northern Ireland has many Eco-Schools with lots of knowledge, ideas and cool projects so I am really looking forward to hearing from you!

Best wishes,
Stacey Passey
Sydney, NSW, Australia

Eco-Schools Northern Ireland
Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful
Bridge House, 2 Paulett Avenue
Belfast, BT5 4HD
Tel: 028 9073 6920
eco-schools@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org