



ECO-SCHOOLS NEWS

August 2015

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Welcome Back!

We hope you have had a great summer break and are looking forward to a new school year full of eco-ideas and successes.

A big congratulations to all [128 schools](#) who achieved their Green Flag award last year - another record breaking year for schools in NI.

This year is shaping up to be a great year again and we have lots of good ideas and projects to help you along the way to achieving Eco-Schools awards, so keep your eyes peeled here for more information throughout the year.

Deadlines for Green Flag submissions 2016.

- **8th January 2016** - guaranteed for assessment before the Easter break
- **11th March 2016** - guaranteed for assessment before 24th June 2016.

Remember you can submit an application any time throughout the school year. Have a look at our [website](#) for more information on the application process.



Lisnasharragh Primary School, Belfast, celebrate Green Flag Success

Minister Backs Hedgehog Campaign

Mark H Durkan, Minister of the Environment has launched a rallying call for people to protect hedgehogs.

In the 1950s it was estimated there were 36.5 million hedgehogs in Britain. It seems likely that there are now fewer than a million hedgehogs left.

Hedgehogs play a positive role in our gardens by feeding on slugs and snails and are one of our priority species. You could encourage them into your school grounds by leaving suitable food such as mealworms or cat/dog food out for them.

You can also give hedgehogs a home in your green space by providing a safe habitat. They like thick dense undergrowth and a variety of lengths of grass which is a great reason to include a 'wild' area in your garden. You could even build a 'hedgehog hotel'. A simple wooden box design with entrance holes and a watertight lid makes the perfect home for them. Creating a small gap in fences will also help them move along the green corridors you create for them.



Read the full story on our website [here](#).

We will be suggesting more hints and ideas during the year and would love to hear from you if you have hedgehogs in your school grounds.



**LIVE
HERE
LOVE
HERE**

We are teaming up with Live Here Love Here for our annual Eco-Schools World Days of Action

Eco-Schools World Days of Action 2-6 Nov 2015 - Live Here Love Here

World Days of Action, held annually, is an initiative of the Foundation for Environmental Education's (FEE) International Eco-Schools programme and is designed to empower students worldwide, to be the change our sustainable world needs, by engaging them in fun, action-oriented learning.

This year Eco-Schools NI are teaming up with the Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, [Live Here Love Here](#) Campaign encouraging everyone to show some love, for this place we call home, by taking part in an environmental Day of Action.

We are inviting schools to register an event and do one or all of the following:

- **Clean-Up** - tidy up your school grounds or a local grot spot by holding a litter pick event.
- **Green-Up** - brighten up a run down plot by clearing out the weeds and doing some planting.
- **Spruce-Up** - come together to tackle graffiti and vandalism by splashing a little paint around and revitalising a dingy corner.

Contact ruth.vanry@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org to register for more information and a toolkit to help with your day.

"We would encourage everyone to [pledge](#) their commitment today and make that one positive change to encourage people across Northern Ireland to show that they love where they live by helping out in their local communities."

*- Dr. Ian Humphreys,
CEO Keep Northern
Ireland Beautiful.*

**Fact: NI suffers
a £40m bill for
street cleaning
per year**

Trócaire and Eco-Schools 'Go Green, Go Global' Poster Competition

The theme of this Eco-Schools and Trócaire poster competition is 'Go Green, Go Global' and it is asking primary school pupils to think about how their own daily routine could be improved to reduce their carbon footprint and lessen the impact on those countries around the world which are already feeling the harmful effects of Global Warming and Climate Change.

The competition suggests links to helpful teaching resources with which to approach the topic. It addresses the Eco-Schools Global Perspective topic which naturally links to many more Eco-Schools topics and will help you work towards Eco-Schools awards.

The winning school will be presented with the unique, bespoke sculpture, "Together We Can Build a Better World," created by local artist Gloria Perry and pupils at the Eco-Schools 20th Anniversary Celebration Event.

- The competition closing date is **Friday 16th October 2015**.

More information and entry forms can be found on our [website](#) or contact ruth.vanry@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org for more details.



Above: Prize sculpture 'Together We Can Build a Better World'

School news: Ballycraigy Hosts School Grounds Open Day



Fresh off their success of being crowned 'Best of the Best' in the Best Kept School Awards in June, our Ambassador Eco-School for the School Grounds topic, Ballycraigy Primary School, Antrim, welcomed 12 schools and other organisations to their gardens, wildlife area and fitness trail to see what they have been doing.

Visitors were impressed and inspired by the determination of pupils and teachers that has seen the work in the school grounds grow year on year into a fabulous resource including: a wild woodland trail - complete with

hedgehog house; a sunny terrace herb garden; the Muckamore heritage garden; a bountiful vegetable garden with greenhouse and poly-tunnel; a fitness trail and let's not forget the hens - Chicken Nugget, Chicken Lickin' and Chicken Drumstick!

Inside the school was a display of other Eco-Schools projects completed by the school and a delicious spread of homemade treats courtesy of the amazing parent team who provide great support throughout the year in the garden and other areas.

Ballycraigy's success stems from great buy in from pupils, teachers, school management, parents and other community organisations who have helped along the way. They have also made good use of funding opportunities and the [Cash for Clobber](#) scheme to raise funds for their school grounds improvements.



Delivery Partner news:

We are delighted to have the continued support of many of our local Councils for the Eco-Schools programme.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council have 3 Cluster Group dates in the diary. Get along to one of these useful events to hear from the Council, Eco-Schools and other organisations about projects you can get involved in. These meetings are also a great opportunity to chat to other schools in your area and exchange ideas.

- 06 Oct -12.30-3.00pm. Slieve Gullion Forest Park, Killeavey, Newry, BT35 8SW
- 07 Oct - 2.30-4.30pm. Down Council Offices, Downpatrick, BT30 6RA
- 12 Oct -12.30-3.00pm. Nautilus Centre, Rooney Road, Kilkeel, BT34 4AG

Contact [Lucinda Scott](#) in Downpatrick and [Patrick McShane](#) in Newry for more information.

Other News:

Eco-Schools National Operators Meeting (NOM)

Northern Ireland has been selected by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) to host the prestigious international Eco-Schools National Operators Conference in November 2015 which will see representatives from FEE and the 59 countries worldwide come to Northern Ireland to share good practice and discuss the on-going development of Eco-Schools for the benefit of young people and our environment globally. As the host nation we will also provide visitors with a rich and welcoming cultural experience and will showcase some of great work being implemented in Northern Ireland's schools. We have many excellent Eco-Schools in NI to be proud of and look forward to showcasing the fantastic work of our schools to our guests from around the world.

Eco-Schools 20th Anniversary Event Video

In March 2015 Eco-Schools celebrated 20 years of the programme with a special event in Magherafelt. The day was attended by 2000 guests from schools, Eco-Schools sponsors and delivery partners, Councils and other environmental organisations. To get a flavour of the day enjoy the video [here](#).

New Eco-Schools Website

We have been working hard this summer to update our website, making it more functional and user friendly. Please visit www.eco-schoolni.org to have a look. We hope you enjoy it and we would love to hear any feedback you might have.

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful news:

Eco-Schools in Northern Ireland is operated by the environmental charity Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful. Here is the latest news on other projects from our organisation -

Marine Litter Survey Released

Following a three year survey by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, it has been discovered that the average kilometre of beach in Northern Ireland has over 5,000 pieces of litter on it.

The Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful team has been counting the litter on beaches from Lough Foyle to Carlingford Lough for the past three years, and the 2015 results are the worst yet. On the fourteen reference beaches, an average of 1,500 bits of plastic, 425 plastic drinks bottles and 180 cotton buds per kilometre were observed.

Chris Allen, who managed the survey for Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, said "Winter storms dumped tonnes of litter onto some beaches overnight, suggesting there is a huge reservoir of litter already in the sea, and we are just adding to it. We must come to terms with the damage we are doing to our own health and prosperity by dropping litter."

It's not all bad news though as we have had well over 3,000 hours volunteered by people keen to improve their local beach and protect its wildlife, which resulted in almost 15.5 tonnes of litter being removed. The effect the carrier bag levy is also beginning to be seen, with no increase in the number of bags despite the growth in amount of litter overall.

For the full [story](#) and a copy of the [report](#) visit www.keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org.

Live Here Love Here in festival clean-up

In July Live Here Love Here was selected to be the charity partner for the 2015 Dalriada Festival. Staff and a troop of volunteers made their way to Glenarm Castle for a fantastic weekend. They met lots of new people who were certainly proud to say they 'Live Here' and 'Love Here'. A continuous stream of volunteers carried out casual litter picks while enjoying the daytime activities and many stayed to enjoy the concert after doing their bit. 12 volunteers worked for 3 full hours the next day to clean-up the main concert area - they did a fantastic job!!!



While most people don't usually drop litter, crowd mentality seems to take hold at large scale events. The reality is that littering is littering no matter where it happens and that it will need to be picked up by somebody else. We are left wondering - would people still litter if the cost of the clean-up was added to their ticket price?

A number of great prizes were given away on the day - including a helicopter trip for a bird's-eye view of the breathtaking coast and glens scenery. To pledge your support to the Live Here Love Here campaign visit www.livehereandlovehere.org.



Funding Opportunities:

2015/16 Challenge Fund

The 2015/16 Challenge Fund is now open for applications from schools across Northern Ireland.

The Environmental Education category is open to schools, who can apply for support of up to **£4,000**.



Applications will be welcomed **until noon Friday 25th September 2015**. Successful applicants will be able to commence their projects at the end of October 2015.

For information on how to apply please visit the NIEA funding [webpage](#). For further details on eligibility please refer to the [guidance notes](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document. If you have any further queries please contact the Challenge Fund team at ChallengeFund@doeni.gov.uk.

Live Here Love Here Small Grants Scheme

The Live Here Love Here small grants scheme is open to volunteer groups who would like to complete an environmental or community improvement project in their local area. Grants are available from **£500 to £5,000** and are open to volunteer and community groups, all school and third level education organisations, youth groups and sports clubs undertaking civic pride projects in the following Council areas:

- Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
 - Ards and North Down Borough Council
 - Belfast City Council
 - Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
 - Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
 - Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (via Down Your Street programme)
- Projects must take place within the boundaries of the participating Council areas, by groups operating within those Council, areas to qualify.

**Closing date for applications is 12 noon
28th September 2015**

Click [here](#) to visit the website, read about projects who received funding last year and download an application pack.

If you have any questions please email: small-grants@livehereandlovehere.org



Give Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful a 'Helping Hand'

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, the charity which operates the Eco-Schools programme in Northern Ireland, 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 partnership – 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](#).

Contact us at:

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

Don't stop here! Visit our Eco-Schools Northern Ireland [website](#) for more news, project ideas, programme guidance, case studies, delivery partner information, and much more.