

20 December 2021

Dear Council,

Council support request for the Eco-Schools Programme in Northern Ireland 2022/23.

This letter is a request for support for the Eco-Schools programme in your council area in 2022/2023 and to highlight the excellent value the Eco-Schools Programme brings to Northern Ireland in helping deliver a safe and sustainable future for our youth.

Your continued support both financially and with staff time is highly appreciated by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful and is critical to the success of the programme in educating young people on environmental issues and empowering them to make informed choices, take positive action and be the change needed to ensure a sustainable Northern Ireland. We seek to give young people a platform to make their voices heard and influence their peers, communities, policy and decision-makers.

The Eco-Schools programme encourages and directs young people to think about litter, waste and recycling, energy saving, water conservation, transport options, biodiversity, the natural environment they are custodians of, and make positive choices for a better future. We look forward to continuing the relationship we have established over the years which has helped cement Northern Ireland as a top achiever globally in the Eco-Schools programme.

Eco-Schools creates behavioural change in our youth and we have seen it dispersing into society via our Eco-Campuses and Eco-clubs who are now engaging and valuing the impact of the Green Flag Award. Currently Stranmillis College and Queen's University are working with us and we now have over 30 Eco-Clubs engaging with us with 5 now having achieved their Green Flag. The programme may start in schools however, the impact is far reaching and we only have to look at this growth in Ireland to see the positive impact with 36 campuses registered with 13 awarded the Green Flag including one hospital site. Continued support of our programme will encourage this further growth and spread into the wider society through positive behaviour change.

We bring additional support from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, grant making bodies and other corporate and charity funders and continue to make efforts to diversify funding opportunities for environmental education in Northern Ireland.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind councils they play a vital role in helping us meet our **match funding** for the grant received from DAERA to keep this programme operational. It is important to note that we have so far, because of your continued support, not had to pass the cost on to schools and have been able to offer the programme and assessments for free. We hope to continue this in the future as schools come increasingly under financial pressure. However, loss of council support nationally would result in match funding not being met and the programme either running at a cost to the school or the loss of core funding.

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Other countries have moved to charging schools, however, for us at Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, we believe it is imperative this remains a free programme so **all sections of the community** can benefit equally and it not become a postcode lottery. We have seen recently at COP26 the need for a just transition and we believe environmental education should be free for all. However, the reality may be individual councils who do not support the programme may see their schools paying up to £200 for assessment and award of Green Flag next academic year.

Your responsibility to our youth and your constituents

Belfast Climate Commission Youth Work carried out a recent survey of 13 – 24 year olds with most of the response coming from post primary aged pupils. 1200 young people across Northern Ireland responded to the survey. The report published on the findings specifically mentions the Eco-Schools Programme and the Carbon Literacy Training we offer schools. Below is one of the 5 recommendations:

“According to the responses from the survey the young people trust schools and colleges as places to receive information about climate change. Therefore, it is important that educational settings and staff have the tools, resources and expertise to engage with young people on issues pertaining to climate change. There should also be an emphasis on teacher training and continued professional development on issues such as Carbon Literacy and the Eco-Schools Programme.”

A recent survey carried out by Eco-Schools of teachers across Northern Ireland 469 teachers responded. The results highlighted the need and demand for further support from the Eco-Schools team to support teachers grow in confidence around their knowledge and ability to teach on environmental topics:

- 86% said they had not enough knowledge of the impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss and waste and pollution
- 80% are not confident enough to teach on environmental topics such as climate change, biodiversity loss and waste and pollution
- 93% said it would be beneficial to include some modules on these environmental topics in teacher training either in initial teacher training or Professional development
- 92% said they would avail of the training if it was made available to them (including time to complete it)

This is clear evidence that not only our future voters will be influenced moving forward by whomever is looking after their collective future and the environment but also many of our current voters.

Dealing with the Climate Crisis moving forward, employment within this sector will be in demand and we need to prepare our young people for the jobs they will be working in. Eco-Schools is more than an extracurricular activity; our programme is shaping many young people's future career paths. We are in the process of developing a video to show good examples of how this has already been happening and will continue to expand. By fully investing in our programme you are investing in the NI youth's future.

We at Eco-Schools and Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful as a whole have already started to respond to this broader public agenda and demand from our teachers and youth. We are now delivering Carbon Literacy Training to our Teachers and Youth Leaders across the country. We went a step further to have the Carbon Literacy course accredited as a Grade B at GCSE with the Open College Network Northern Ireland (OCNNI). The official qualification is called: **OCNNI Level 2 Certificate in Reducing Carbon Footprints through Environmental Action**. There are 5 units available with Carbon Literacy being the core unit.

Within this Certificate are the 5 awards everyone helped us pull together:

1. OCNNI Level 2 Award in **Reducing Carbon Footprints through Environmental Action (core module)**
2. OCNNI Level 2 Award in **Biodiversity Recovery**
3. OCNNI Level 2 Award in **Climate Campaigning**
4. OCNNI Level 2 Award in **Tackling Single Use Plastic Waste**
5. OCNNI Level 2 Award in **Tackling Fast Fashion**

We have developed teaching resources to support teachers and youth workers with the delivery of this course.

Statistical Impacts from the Eco-Schools programme

- 100% of schools signed up to Eco-Schools Programme which equates to 326,537 pupils in 1,136 schools and 62 private nursery and educational facilities here.
- 358 schools currently have the Eco-Schools Green Flag and we've seen increases from 147 in 2016/17 to 176 in 2018/19 to 332 in 2019/20 indicating the upward trends in interest in the programme.
- 419,181 sustainable journeys have taken place since 2016 through the Translink Travel Challenge with 19,825 pupils getting involved
- Total increase of schools picking topics and raising awareness since 2017/18:
 - Biodiversity: increase of 209 schools: 15% increase
 - Healthy Living: increase of 251 schools: 22% increase
 - Litter: increase of 234 schools: 20% increase
- 32% of schools in Northern Ireland are flying the internationally recognised Green Flag - Ensuring a positive experience for our young people – through engaging them in actioned-based and socially-responsible learning.
- Total CO₂ saving recorded in the last 3 last academic years is 5602076 Kg

Support for Eco-Schools Going Forward

Over the past few years we have increased the amount of support we offer schools in your council area. The demand has grown exponentially since lockdown and our online resources and support offered during this time has increased in response. Through corporate

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partnerships we have been able to expand our Eco-Schools team to provide feet on the ground in your council area offering direct support to schools in the form of workshops, practical advice and support and online sessions. This corporate funding however is not secure and we can only hope your council play a bigger role in supporting Eco-Schools as we see the programme grow in popularity and strength.

This is already beginning to happen with other Councils partners in recognition of the importance of the Eco-Schools programme in the context of the wider climate crisis and the urgent need for all sectors to move further and faster towards a greener society. We were delighted to see several councils increase their level of support this year in recognition of the growing impact of the programme. Belfast City Council contribute 16.5% alone to the Eco-Schools programme with Derry City and Strabane District Council, Ards and North Down Borough Council and Mid & East Antrim Borough Council all contributing 13% respectively. We understand not all councils are in the position to offer this kind of support especially on the back of COVID19 however, we must be honest and inform councils we feel they are undervaluing the impact and importance of our work and the value added we bring.

From October 2020 – October 2021 as part of our support to schools in your council area our programme provided:

- **The installation of 1 outdoor learning garden to the value of approximately £2,500**
- **The installation of 4 productive biodiversity Gardens to the total value of approximately £6000**
- **£385 amount in Wrigley Litter Less Funding**
- **12 schools were awarded small grants from Live Here Love Here**
- **12 schools were awarded Pollinator Grants**
- **NIHE Energy Schools competition runner up prize: 1 tablet**

Currently your council contributes 2% of the overall Environmental Educational Team budget at a cost of £1,700 per annum (6 pence per pupil). We welcome the opportunity to discuss with you reviewing this investment in light of how the Eco-Schools programme has grown and developed in your Council area and to reflect and sustain the additional staff resource we have put in place to make this happen.

We must also consider there has only been a £200 increase in the level of support since 2015. However, when calculating staff costings, we must take into consideration the percentage increase in cost of living each year which has been approximately 2.4% each year which has not previously been factored in. If all councils were on board with our preferred support option, we would hope to recruit a new member of staff to better support individual councils and give the time for consultation and support which is often requested.

Your continued support also ensures that Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful can offer other environmental education initiatives to schools in your Council area most notably Young Reporter's for the Environment; Single Use Plastic initiatives, Coastal Schools Workshops, Fast fashion Workshops, Installation of Outdoor learning gardens and biodiversity gardens, Wheelie Big Challenge, NIHE schools Energy Competition, Translink Travel Challenge, Erasmus + among many others all of which contribute to schools achieving Eco-Schools Green Flag status.

When budgets are tight across all sectors we understand now may not be the ideal time to request an increase in financial support however, we must emphasise councils have a responsibility to their constituents to create a ‘more resilient Northern Ireland which will take timely and well-informed decisions to address the socio-economic and environmental impacts of climate change’ as highlighted in NI’s second Climate Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP).

Taking all of the above into consideration, increased growth, increase in staff, footfall to our social media sites and online content, cost of living increase, support to council staff, voice of our young people, interest from teachers and the statistical impacts, we only see it fair councils consider an increase in their level of financial support to help match fund our programme. In order for this to happen councils will need to review and evaluate the level of support they currently provide Eco-Schools with and we would invite you to review the following 2 options and an additional awards ceremony contribution.

Option 1: Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful’ s preference.

Support of the Eco-Schools Programme at a cost of **£10,942**. This includes Wheelie Big Challenge and core running cost of the programme, which equates to an investment of approximately **38 pence per pupil** in your council area and would bring your council in line with other investors to the programme.

Option 2:

Support of the Eco-Schools Programme at a cost of **£2,975** would equate to an investment of approximately **10 pence per pupil** in your council area.

Please see the Matrix Grid to compare support

Additional Eco-Schools Award Ceremony: £5000

Organisation and promotion of Eco-School’s Award Ceremony - Council to provide a venue for the event to be hosted in June 2022. These award ceremonies are important to schools and pupils, re-enforcing the importance of their work and introducing pupils to their local council’s involvement and relevance in what they are doing in school. Many have described the anti-climax of 2 years of work not being celebrated. <i>Eco-Schools will organise and host the event including school’s invitations, guest speaker, awards and food and refreshments.</i>	£5000	£5000
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Matrix for Council's Eco-Schools Support options

Deliverable	Option 1	Option 2
A pre-existing programme to assist council delivery of their waste and litter prevention programmes and to help councils meet waste prevention and landfill reduction targets.	X	X
Direct communication with all schools in your council and NI as a whole.	X	X
Support councils in educating and raising awareness on litter, waste and avoidable single use plastics that will be dealt with in forthcoming EU and Northern Ireland Executive Committee legislation.	X	X
The opportunity to be associated with this prestigious international environmental education programme.	X	X
Clear linkage to Council support for young people's environmental leadership development.	X	X
Free training for your staff to become Eco-Schools Green Flag Assessors.	X	X
Provision of assessments and flags	X	X
Organisation of 1 Cluster Group meeting and 1 Green Flag Clinic for teachers in the council area which deliver valuable information to schools progressing through the Eco-Schools programme and provide the council with opportunities to promote their own projects and build relationships with teachers.	X	X
Development of the Ambassador Eco-School network in your Council area - Ambassador Eco-Schools are flagship schools driving their environmental message further into the community and mentoring other schools in their area.	X	X
Providing reports and statistics on schools in your Council area which are involved in the Eco-Schools programme. Annual report provided in July to supporting councils highlighting statistics for schools and information about the new incoming initiatives.	X	X
We provide support for council staff and elected representatives such as responding to ad hoc queries on the status of schools in the council area. However, further consultation on support of developing and delivering initiatives will incur a consultancy fee charge.	X	X

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Access to the Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful Data Hub, which puts information and statistics from Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful programmes you support at your fingertips (www.keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org).	X	X
Opportunities to promote your campaigns and activities through the monthly Eco-Schools newsletter and multiple social media channels and signposting schools to relevant council contacts on the Eco-Schools website (www.eco-schoolsni.org).	X	
Opportunity to promote campaigns, events and activities in the monthly Eco-Schools newsletter and two social media posts annually . Posts and article must be provided in full.		X
Preference given to schools in council areas supporting the programme for promotion through media outlets.	X	X
Allowing schools access to additional funding provided through Eco-Schools for projects such as the international Wrigley Litter Less campaign.	X	X
Dedicated Field Officer working on Wheelie Big Challenge and direct schools engagement in your council area.	X	
Wheelie Big Challenge: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contact school Eco-Coordinators to recruit schools to the project, • manage all communications, • Provide the toolkit for school and home • provide workshops/webinars and support, • ensure data is gathered and uploaded correctly • gather competition entries, • organise invitations to the final award event and • generate PR around the project. • Produce an end of project report to be included with your Eco-Schools report in July. 	X	

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We can all sense that these are important times for the environment and society both locally and globally. Eco-Schools therefore will have an increasingly critical role in mobilising staff and pupils to adapt to the changes that will be required and to be part of the answer and the solution to the many issues becoming apparent. It is evident from recent developments including the Global Climate Strikes and the Conference of Parties (COP26) in Glasgow that young people also are asking for support and affirmative action. Eco-Schools provides a very practical action-based delivery mechanism for the many solutions. Working together we can all build a better future. Whilst any one of us working alone will struggle to get the critical mass needed.

Enclosed is an Eco-Schools Support Request Form. I would be very grateful if you could provide the necessary Purchase Order number by the end of January 2022 to ensure access to the benefits listed above is maintained in 2022/23.

If you require any further information or clarification on anything above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely



Charlene McKeown
Environmental Education Manager
Charlene.mckeown@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org
Tel: 07845050890
Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful

Eco-Schools Support 2022-2023 Request Form

Please tick your preferred option:

- ☐ Option 1: **£10, 942** at a rate of 38 pence per pupil
- ☐ Option 2: **£2,975** at a rate of 10 pence per pupil
- ☐ Additional Eco-Schools Award Ceremony: **£5,000**

..... Council

- ☐ Agrees to support the Eco-Schools Programme

OR

- ☐ Do not wish to support the Eco-Schools Programme

Council Purchase Order Number (required for invoicing)

Signed

Name

Position/job title.....

Date.....

Please return to:

Victoria Rowan
Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful
Bridge House
2 Paulett Avenue
Belfast
BT5 4HD

victoria.rowan@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org

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KEEP NORTHERN IRELAND BEAUTIFUL

Report on the Eco-Schools Programme

For supporting councils

October Report for the Period:

March 2021 – October 2021

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Introduction

Eco-Schools is an international award programme that guides schools on their sustainable journey, providing a framework to help embed these principles into the heart of school life. The Eco-Schools programme is an internationally recognised Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) programme now operating in 72 countries worldwide, representing more than 59,000 schools and 20 million pupils.

Eco-Schools in Northern Ireland is administered by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful with financial support from DAERA and 11 local councils. It is also supported by 8 sponsors and 32 Delivery Partners (councils, NGOs etc.), without whose practical support the programme could not have achieved the success and recognition it has received.

FEE

Eco-Schools is one of five environmental education programmes run internationally by the [Foundation for Environmental Education](#) (FEE). In addition to Eco-Schools, FEE runs Green Key, Young Reporters for the Environment, Blue Flag for Beaches & Marinas and Learning about Forests. In 2009, Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (formerly TIDY Northern Ireland) became a full Member of FEE.

Present situation of the programme

On 28th October 2021, the programme had 1,136 schools and 64 private nurseries or educational centres registered in Northern Ireland which is 100% of schools. The total number of live Green Flag awards is 358 which represents **32% of schools**. This figure has **increased by 5%** since the February report, likely as a result of our late application window to ensure schools had every opportunity to apply when they returned to schools during COVID-19. School closures due to Covid-19, has had a negative impact on the amount of schools being able to gather enough evidence to reapply and we expect a huge increase in applications this March. We currently have **165 schools** who have begun and are actively working towards their Green Flag and it is only October.

We have moved all of our assessments to the one time of year this academic year and will continue to do this moving forward. Therefore, schools must apply in March 2022 and will be assessed during the months of April and May 2022. We will then invite schools along to Eco-School Award ceremonies in each of the 11 councils to celebrate the amazing work our young people and school staff have been doing. As a result, moving forward we will have one set of data every June/July representing the complete academic year's successes.

In addition to the Eco-Schools Green Flag, schools can also achieve intermediate accreditation by obtaining Bronze and Silver self-assessed award status, with at present 123 schools having achieved a *maximum* of Bronze level and 164 having achieved a *maximum* of Silver level.

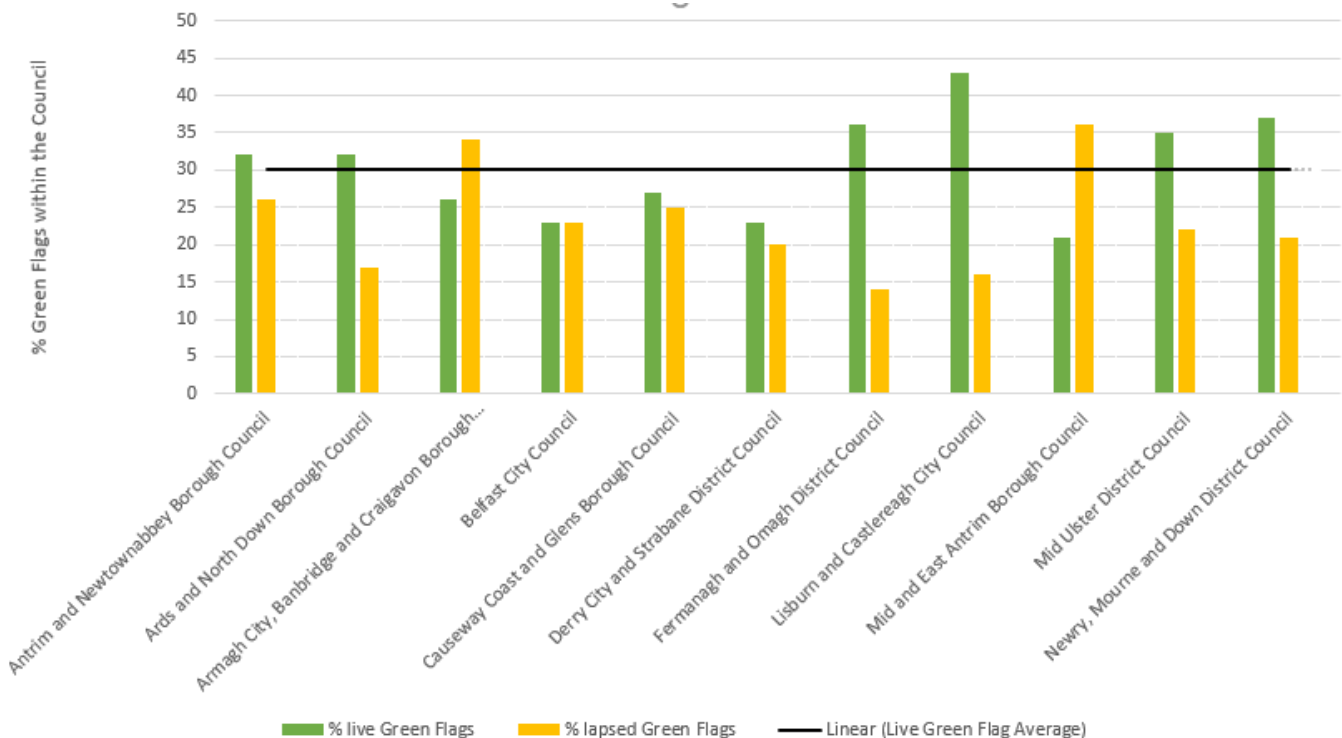
Green Flag Schools

We assessed and awarded 94 schools with Green Flags in Northern Ireland from April 2021 – June 2021. Due to COVID-19, extended school closures and to accommodate our new annual application/assessment process we met with FEE to agree an extension of Green Flag Awards for schools due to expire in May 2021 through to March 2022. These figures are already included in our current total live green flags.

The graph below shows the percentage of live and lapsed Green Flags within each of the supporting council areas in relation to the national averages:

Figure 1

Figure 1: Percentage live and lapsed Green Flags in each of the supporting council areas. The solid horizontal line represents both the national average percentage of live Green Flags and the national average percentage of lapsed Green Flags. Both values are currently the same.



Updates, New Developments and Initiatives

In light of COVID-19 and the Climate Crisis we face, we at Eco-Schools have taken time to re-evaluate the programme and how accessible it is to a teacher and more particularly post primary teachers as they are the least likely to engage and also to our youth. Having the experience of a post primary teacher working on the programme has given us an insight into the barriers these teachers face when searching for additional time to work on the programme.

New Employees

With success of additional corporate partners of the Eco-Schools programme we have been successful in expanding our staff team. In June we employed a new Environmental Education Coordinator Niamh Nic Cana and now have four field officers working across the organisation but in particular Eco-Schools. Their names are Anna Green, Harry Murphy, Gareth Lamrock and Conor Bush. Each Field officer is responsible for particular schools in particular council areas and funding from councils has determined the amount of support available from the field officers in each area.

Early response to the new Field Officers in post

We have seen a huge increase in engagement from August to October from our schools with our Field Officers targeting dormant and lapsed schools with our new programmes and opportunities for schools to get involved in. This time last year we had 82 attendees at our Cluster Group Meeting and this year we saw 246, there have been 51 121 (30minute – 60 minute) meetings over zoom with

teachers in September and October compared to zero last year due to staff capacity, the field officers are able to deliver in person workshops and support on a daily basis to the schools in their assigned council areas and demand is already nearly at capacity until the New Year. The overwhelming gratitude from teachers to now have feet on the ground in their council area directly supporting them with the Eco-Schools Programme has been immense and already feedback is coming in weekly.

Please see appendix 1 attached to view the breakdown of these statistics for your council area.

Green Flag applications

A log in area, "School Zone", was developed several years ago for teachers and includes a Resource Library and Data Zone. This area has been designed to allow teachers to upload documents and data throughout the year, making the Green Flag application and renewal process simpler and more streamlined. Schools will not be able to submit their application without recording data in the Data Zone for at least their Major topic, with the intention that Minor topics must be included in the near future.

As a response to COVID-19 we continued with the desk assessment method, implemented in line with FEE international guidance and a decision to award the Green Flag was made based on the strength of information and evidence provided. As such, new guidance and resources were produced to ensure the confidence of teachers applying and the quality of applications. Flags were posted directly to successful schools and relevant documentation was emailed. We intend on where possible continuing with some desktop assessments if the evidence is overwhelmingly good and our field officers have visited the school on several occasions throughout the year and are aware of the standard of work ongoing in the school. We hope this will cut down on our Carbon Footprint and encourage more schools to upload and submit extensive data and evidence in support of their application which is something we have noted from June 2020 to June 2021.

As mentioned earlier we have moved the application window and assessment schedule to the one time of year to ensure we have one set of complete data at the end of each academic year. Applications will close in March each year, schools will be assessed in April/May and in person award ceremonies in each council area will happen in June. Those schools due to expire from September 2021 – February 2021 will have their Green Flag Award extended to allow for us to ensure a just transition to our award process. We consulted with FEE on this and they were happy to support this and feel it is an extremely worthwhile change to process.

School Zone Calendar/Planner Update

We have had the 'School Zone Calendar/Planner' updated to reflect all the programmes we now offer either as in person workshops or online support for projects. Teachers can now register their interest on the school zone and the field officer then downloads the schools in their council area and makes contact to arrange a workshop. This updated process went live on the 11th October and we have already 88 requests to take part in certain projects. We hope to see demand grow in this area but are aware in order to support all schools we will need to continue to grow our team.

Eco-Schools Newsletter

The monthly Eco-Schools newsletter is aimed at all Eco-Coordinators, Eco-Schools sponsors and delivery partners in Northern Ireland. The newsletter contains news, examples of good practice, statistics, case studies, workshop, environmental education activities, campaigns, training opportunities and latest awards. Monthly issues of the Eco-Schools Newsletters are published on the Eco-Schools website at <http://eco-schoolsni.org> There is a section dedicated to Council News with the aim to increase awareness of councils' support of the programme and provides an opportunity for you to share any news also. **Please send through any content by the 15th of the month for inclusion.**

Eco-Schools cluster group meetings and support workshops

Feedback from schools who attended the Cluster Group Meetings over ZOOM last year was overwhelmingly supportive of using this method moving forward. Therefore, this academic year we hosted 11 Cluster Group Meetings with a total of 246 attendees over the ZOOM platform.

Moving forward we at Eco-Schools will continue to organise all Cluster Group Meetings. The same process will remain: We will forward a few dates to you to pick from. Once a date is organised we will contact delivery partners to engage with us and then invite our teachers in your council area along to attend. We will continue using ZOOM as our platform. If there is a specific focus you would like for the meeting, we can discuss this in advance and be sure to focus on this area.

We have also planned 5 online workshops for teachers, delivery partners and councils. Two Action Plan Clinics and three Green Flag application clinics. Registration links are in our most recent newsletter.

Upcoming Action Plan Clinics:

- 9th November
- 11th November

Upcoming Application Clinics:

- 14th December
- 18th January
- 22nd February

Eco-Schools Awards Ceremonies

The Eco-Schools team will arrange Eco-Schools Award ceremonies across the 11 participating councils in June 2022. We hope for these awards to be hosted in council buildings in each area and that the work is a collaborative piece.

At the Award ceremonies schools from across your council area will be invited along to receive the winner's awards for programmes and initiatives such as:

- Eco-Schools Green Flag
- Eco-Teacher of the Year (in each council)
- Young Reporters for the Environment
- Wrigley Litter Less
- Wheelie Big Challenge
- NIHE School's Energy Competition
- Translink Travel Challenge
- 30 under 30

Eco-Schools Northern Ireland Website and Social Media Platforms

Eco-Schools Northern Ireland has its own dedicated section for [Delivery Partners](#) on the Eco-Schools website and a [Resources](#) section to which we are continually adding curriculum based teacher information and classroom activities linked to all key stages and school case studies sharing best practise.

The Eco-School's website also includes a News section with up-to-date information about events, initiatives, competitions, campaigns and newsletters etc.

Councils have been asked to provide information so that we can update individual pages for each council. Details of council contacts can be found at the following link: <https://www.eco-schoolsni.org/cgi-bin/partners?instanceID=1h>

Eco-Schools have active **Facebook**, **Twitter** and **Instagram** accounts. In response to COVID-19 we are aware these along with our website are our main means of effective communication with our partners,

teachers, parents and young people. As mentioned previously our newsletter will go out over these platforms and in addition, we are sending out online environmental education resources to encourage and enable the Eco-Schools programme to be applied in all settings.

We have also added an **Eco-Schools NI YouTube channel** to share all of our videos and online content created such as educational webinars and workshops for our teachers and young people.

We have a large increase in our footfall to our website and social media platforms over the last year as a result of our immense online effort. Our IGTV has started to get quite a lot of views. We hope to see this continue to grow now teachers and young people have returned to education. With ever-changing restrictions, here at Eco-Schools we were very much prepared to support parents home-schooling and sharing our message of sustainable living and working towards zero net emissions.

Resources to support New Programme Guidance

For each topic we have developed further whole school resources across 7 key stages to ensure the work is not burdensome for the Eco-Coordinator but is rather a whole school initiative. The Eco-Coordinator can now disseminate these resources across the school and ensure each teacher delivers them. Previously this happened in primary schools however there was not the same support for post primary. We have launched several of our topic resources with the rest due to be released throughout the academic year.

Added Value to the Schools in Your Council

There are a range of other opportunities available to schools to improve their environmental education credentials through the Eco-Schools team that provide added value to the Council investment in the Eco-Schools programme. **Please see the attached appendix for specific details relating to your Council area:**

Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE)

Young Reporters for the Environment gives young people aged 11-25 a platform to research environmental issues and promote solutions through investigative reporting, photography, and video journalism. It is an international programme, accredited by the Foundation for Environmental Education, with 360,000 reporters in 45 countries. Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful is the National Operator for the programme, which is open to schools across Northern Ireland, including your Council area. The YRE is run here as part of the Wrigley Litter Less Campaign to encourage positive behaviour change towards littering and the 6Rs.

Young reporters at post primary level are asked to investigate an environmental issue, propose solutions, report their findings in an article and inform others by sharing this through as many media outlets as possible. Themes explored in the past included litter and waste with an emphasis currently on the topical issues of single use plastics and the climate crisis. The programme effectively engages and equips young people to tell stories, building their communication and critical thinking skills and competencies.

This year we are asking 25 post-primary schools to take part in our YRE Programme. Eco-Schools has requested expressions of interest from schools, including those in your Council area. We are offering workshops to support teachers delivering YRE in their schools and have already seen a huge interest in this.

Wrigley Litter Less Campaign (WLL)

With the support of the Wrigley Foundation, the WLL has entered its 10th year in September 2020. An online campaign was launched and ran from the 18th – 31st October. In addition to the online campaign Eco-Schools is looking for 25 schools to take part in this year's campaign. Schools are being asked to choose one criterion among three possible criteria (weight of litter in the school grounds; weight of paper recycled in the school; weight of dry recyclable material). Eco-Schools has requested expressions

of interest from schools, including those in your Council area. There is funding awarded to schools participating in this project to the tune of around £200.

Coastal Schools Workshop

With the support of our tackling Plastic Team at KNIB we have developed a Coastal Schools workshop looking at the dangers of plastic in the ocean. The pupils also receive OSPAR Marine Litter Survey Training and survey a transect of their local beach. The results from the 30 schools across NI will be compiled into a youth Marine Litter Survey this academic year. The delivery of this project is carried out by the Eco-Schools Team.

Tackling Fast Fashion Workshop

With the support of our Tackling Fast Fashion Team at KNIB and a partnership with Junk Kouture we have developed a Fast Fashion practical workshop which we hope to deliver across 30 schools in NI this year. We hope this programme will help with Post primary engagement.

Eco-Schools, Single-Use Plastic and YRE Webinars

Eco-Schools have had a range of key note speakers and social influencers to enthuse and motivate our teachers and young people to become more environmentally aware. We have covered topics such as fast fashion, plastic free beauty routines, home growing, outdoor learning, repurposing your waste, packaging, land-originated plastic pollution and many other areas of interest within all 11 of our topics. Again these social media influencers have brought a new post primary audience to our social media platforms. All webinars are uploaded on our website and our YouTube channel to ensure schools can use them as resources retrospectively.

Eco-Teacher of the Year Award in each council

This award will happen at the award ceremonies in each council in June 2022.

Eco-Campus

We are also targeting universities and colleges in council areas to participate in our YRE programme especially when students there have specifically chosen journalism and media as their preferred subject. Again we hope to see more engagement and as a result these campuses signing up to join Eco-Campus. We have been in talks with St Mary's University Belfast about working towards becoming an Eco-Campus. We are also delivering Carbon Literacy to Queen's University Belfast. Green Week for university campuses has been arranged for March 7th -11 2022.

Translink Travel Challenge

Translink has successfully teamed up with Eco-Schools over the past 11 years as sponsor of the Transport topic, which encourages children and young people to think about developing sustainable travel plans and/or habits. Through school engagement and support, Translink Travel Challenge promotion and delivery, production of transport themed learning resources, events and activities, the successful collaboration between Eco-Schools NI and Translink has successfully engaged a growing number of schools every year. This is evident in a 25% increase in participation in the Translink Travel Challenge since its inception in 2009.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive Schools Energy Efficiency Awareness Programme.

This new initiative will help encourage schools to become more aware of the amount of energy they are using and ways in which to reduce this. If schools adapt and make changes they will not only be reducing their emissions but will also make financial savings, similar to concept behind the Wheelie Big Challenge. There are awareness lesson plans and a poster competition toolkit. This is the first year NIHE and worked with Eco-Schools in what appears to be a very exciting partnership. The winners received £500 for their school, a laptop each and a professional sketch of their eco-hero. This project is about to move into phase II with an additional Young Reporters for the Environment Resource for

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Post Primary English Language Teachers to avail off. Please view the competition winners professional designs below:

[FULL DETAILS Design an Eco-Hero Competition WINNERS x 5 \(plus 8 Commended entries\) 2020-21\).pdf](#)

[The Housing Executive - News \(nihe.gov.uk\)](http://nihe.gov.uk)

Dankse Bank Productive Outdoor Learning Gardens Project

11 schools across the country (1 in each council area) have been chosen to take part in our new and exciting partnership with Danske Bank. To date they have engaged in an outdoor learning webinar, 2 outdoor learning and biodiversity workshops and carried out a planting project on their school grounds, planting fruit trees and bushes. Harvest events have just finished and the final workshop around composting and cuttings is due to take place in November. We are about to commence on 11 new outdoor learning gardens across the councils and hopefully will get to pilot a post primary aspect to this project also.

Radius Housing Productive Biodiversity Gardens Project

16 schools across the country are involved in this shared education project to increase Biodiversity on their school grounds on their journey towards a Green Flag. They were involved in the planning, planting and harvesting of a productive biodiversity garden. The harvesting is ongoing at present. This project is a legacy project with 18 new schools due to commence workshops late December and early January as part of phase II.

Wheelie Big Challenge

The Wheelie Big Challenge is a practical initiative that helps schools learn about and implement the waste topic, thus helping achieve the Eco-Schools Green Flag Award. The Wheelie Big Challenge programme combines teaching resources with practical actions and advice on how to improve the school's performance around the waste management 6 R's – **Rethink, Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repair and Recycle**. Provision of a toolkit enables young people to also take this learning beyond the school grounds, having the added benefit of encouraging improved household recycling. This initiative has run in a number of Council areas over the past couple of years and has significantly contributed to Eco-Schools Green Flag accreditation for participating schools. Please contact a member of the Eco-Schools team if you are interested in running this scheme in your Council area. For those councils involved already workshops have commenced in participating schools.

Live Here, Love Here

There is a big push on schools to participate in 'Adopt a Spot' this will also help towards their application for Green Flag status and there is no reason this cannot be a starting point for all schools to get involved. The new app has launched and should really help and encourage young people especially post primary to engage.

We hope to see this reduce litter in local council areas and in and around school grounds which would be hotspots for litter and in time with education see a reduction of waste.

Small Grants, Marine Grants and Pollinator Grants

These grants have been made available to schools and this year alone we received applications from 174 schools across the country. These schools received support in applying from both the Eco-Schools and Live Here Love Here teams at Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful

Carbon Literacy Training

Teachers and pupils are now able to avail of the accredited Carbon Literacy Training provided by KNIB. There is teacher substitute cover available for teachers attending and they will be provided with the pupil teaching resources on completing the course.

OCNNI Level 2 Certificate in Reducing Carbon Footprints through Environmental Actions

We have recently been successful in developing a Grade B equivalent GCSE with the Open College Network Northern Ireland. Teachers receive the resources to teach the pupils the course and can avail as mentioned above of our Carbon Literacy Training free of charge.

Within this Certificate are the 5 awards everyone helped us pull together:

1. OCNNI Level 2 Award in **Reducing Carbon Footprints through Environmental Action (core module)**
2. OCNNI Level 2 Award in **Biodiversity Recovery**
3. OCNNI Level 2 Award in **Climate Campaigning**
4. OCNNI Level 2 Award in **Tackling Single Use Plastic Waste**
5. OCNNI Level 2 Award in **Tackling Fast Fashion**

Please view the full specification here: [Specification OCN NI L2 Award-Cert in Reducing Carbon Footprints through Environmental Action.pdf](#)

We are working in partnership with Action Renewables to release a teacher resource to support the Level 2 Award in Climate Campaigning.

Presence at COP26

Our Environmental Education Manager represented Eco-Schools NI along with teacher Sandra Patterson from Ambassador School Ulidia Integrated College to speak about the programme at the Teacher's COP in Glasgow on the 30th October. One of the main asks from teachers globally was more support from government and public bodies for the Eco-Schools Programmes and other environmental initiatives which will support pupil and teacher learning around Climate Education.

We also have sent 3 young people to report on COP26 as Young Reporters for the Environment. They have already been reporting from the Blue Zone and will continue to do this until Friday 12th November. Please follow us on social media to see their unique insight:

- Facebook @EcoSchoolsNI
- Instagram @eco.ni
- Twitter @Eco_SchoolsNI

Belfast Climate Commission Youth Working Group

Our Environmental Education Manager plays an active role on the Youth Working Group. The network Eco-Schools has provided in gaining feedback from young people across Northern Ireland has been pivotal in the large response to the recent survey results being showcased at Belfast city Hall on Friday 5th November at the 2021 Climate Crisis Youth Summit. We use our network to ensure all young people and teachers across NI are informed about the climate crisis and how young people can play their part.

Erasmus+ Youth Environmental Education Congress (YEEC)

WE have been successful in gaining 5 places for young people across NI to travel to Prague in March to attend and play a leading role in the Youth Environmental Education Congress which runs in parallel to the World Environmental Education Congress. We have recently interviewed and appointed 5 very impressive young climate activists to represent Eco-Schools and NI at the congress. Prior to going these young people will meet with ministers to discuss their asks and those asks of ministers from world leaders in the Education Sector.

[11TH WORLD Environmental Education CONGRESS WEEC \(weec2022.org\)](https://www.weec2022.org/)

Promotional Added Value

Bauer Media Radio Campaign

We ran a £10,000 Bauer Media radio campaign across Cool FM and Downtown Radio to promote the Wrigley Litter Less campaign and the eco-schools programme as a whole. This ran for a week in October.

Social Media Post Boosts

We now have the facility to boost our social media posts to increase engagement. This will begin in December 2021 and we hope to see a marked increase in the audience we are reaching as we are keen to reach parents.

Mid Ulster District Council Eco-Schools Metrics
October 2021

- Number of schools registered in council area – 130
- Total number of pupils in council area – 29,036
- Number of schools who have achieved the Green Flag – 74
- Number of schools with current Green Flags – 45 (35%)
- Number of schools with lapsed Green Flags – 29 (22%)
- Green Flags awarded:
 - 2015/16 - 19
 - 2016/17 – 26
 - 2017/18 – 13
 - 2018/19 – 29
 - 2019/20 – 12
 - 2020/21 - 27
- Cluster Group Meetings: 1 meeting with 11 teachers in attendance.
- Danske Bank Outdoor Learning Garden installed – 1
- Radius Housing Productive Biodiversity Garden Installed - 4
- Harvest and Tasting Event at the Outdoor Learning Garden - 5
- NIHE Energy competition awards: 1 tablet
- Pollinator Grants Awarded: 12 schools
- Small Grants Awarded: 12 Schools
- Wrigley Litter Less Seed Funding Awarded: £385
- Wrigley YRE award: £500
- Awareness and engagement with Eco-Schools Topics:

Topic	Number of Schools engaged in topic	Overall Percentage (%)
Biodiversity	35	27
Climate Action	11	8
Energy	35	27
Global Perspective	22	17
Healthy Living	45	35
Litter	37	28
Marine	2	2
Outdoor Learning	36	28
Transport	13	10
Waste	41	32
Water	15	12