

<b>Report on</b>	National Tree Week 2023
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> January 2024
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Mark McAdoo, Assistant Director: Environmental Services
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Karl McGowan, Waste & Sustainable Development Manager

<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To update members on a number of community engagement events that took place during National Tree Week 2023.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	During National Tree Week 2023, which ran from the 25 <sup>th</sup> November till the 3 <sup>rd</sup> December 2023 a number of community engagement events were organised / attended by the Mid Ulster District Council Sustainability, Recycling Education & Biodiversity Team. These initiatives aimed to make an important contribution to environmental sustainability by mitigating the effects of climate change whilst meeting shared education objectives in terms recycling and biodiversity.
2.2	Trees play a crucial role in restoring carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas responsible for climate change. Through photosynthesis, trees absorb CO <sub>2</sub> and release oxygen, acting as natural carbon sinks. The 150 trees planted during the event will contribute significantly to reducing our carbon footprint within Mid Ulster. The planted trees will serve as habitats for various species, promoting biodiversity within the local environment. This fosters ecological resilience and contributes to maintaining a healthy and balanced ecosystem
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b><u>Tullyvar Landfill Tree Planting</u></b>
3.1.1	The tree planting event took place on Thursday 30 <sup>th</sup> November at Tullyvar Landfill Site and brought together students from Aughnacloy Primary School, Richmond Primary School, St Malachy's Primary School and St Mary's Primary School. This collaborative cross community event addressed the pressing issue of climate change and also aligned with our recycling education commitment of fostering a sense of environmental responsibility and awareness. The event witnessed an enthusiastic turnout of 94 pupils accompanied by 9 teachers, with active

participation from various sections of the school community. Altogether 150 trees were planted during the event, symbolising a collective commitment to growing environmental stewardship.

3.1.2 In order to reinforce the educational component of the initiative, pupils were allocated a letter A-D when they arrived at the site, which in turn allocated them to 1 of 4 educational activity stations and moved around in sequence. All of the visitors to the site were provided with a Hi Vis vest, followed by a Health and Safety talk by the Site Manger. Workshops began with one group planting the tree whips and learning about the initial stages in tree growth. Another group were led by the Waste and Sustainability Officer learned about recycling while playing recycling themed outdoor games. The Recycling Education Officers then guided students in making paper potters and planting daffodil bulbs. A fourth group carried out Tree ID lessons with the Biodiversity Officer to raise awareness about the importance of trees in mitigating climate change. The children learned valuable insights on the role of trees in carbon sequestration, improving air quality, and promoting biodiversity.

3.1.3 The event served as a catalyst for community building, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for environmental sustainability in future generations. Collaborative efforts between students, teachers and council staff showcased the potential for collective action in addressing global challenges on a local level; Considering the success of this initiative, it is planned that the team organises annual tree planting events to sustain and expand the positive impact on the environment within our Mid Ulster Council area. The team plan to explore further opportunities to integrate environmental education, including the importance of trees and climate change mitigation, into the school curriculum via school talks, event participation and the advancement of programmes such as Eco Schools and Green Flag Awards.

## **3.2 No Dig Gardening Demonstration**

3.2.1 Despite the recent increase in interest in growing your own food many people are still being put off by the perceived work involved in setting up your own garden or plot and the physical work required to dig it, weed it and maintain it. To help break down these barriers to growing your own food, Mid Ulster District Council is running a series of “No Dig” gardening demonstrations in partnership with Natural World products (NWP) / New Leaf Composting (NLC) who provided the compost and the assistance of their community engagement officer.

3.2.2 No Dig gardening as the name suggests doesn't require you to dig and cultivate the ground. Rather it utilizes raised beds for growing using peat free organic compost recycled from the Council's own brown bin and green waste recycling schemes. These beds can be formalised beds made using planks or other forms of edging or they can be simply edged with wood chip to contain the compost. Rather than having to dig the bed each year all you have to do is top it up with fresh compost.

3.2.3 All of the brown bin material and green waste collected through the Council's brown bin and recycling centres respectively is collected and composted by NWP.

<p>3.2.4</p> <p>3.3</p> <p>3.3.1</p> <p>3.3.2</p>	<p>In turn NWP have set up NLC to refine, market and develop their compost products so that it can take the place of peat products.</p> <p>The “No Dig” demos will show participants how to prepare the ground for the “No Dig” bed, not by digging but by simply covering the area to be converted with cardboard to suppress any weeds and then laying between 15 – 20cm of recycled organic compost on top, all contained by a formal edge or simply edged with wood chip as shown in the photos attached. The first of these demos was completed in the Bellaghy Open Door Complex on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and further demos will be completed in early 2024 in the Cookstown and Dungannon areas.</p> <p><b><u>Drumcairne Forest Tree Planting</u></b></p> <p>During Tree Week the Sustainability, Recycling Education &amp; Biodiversity Team also assisted the Open Spaces &amp; Recreation Section who organised a parallel event in Drumcarine Forest, Stewartstown. Assistance involved providing equipment and running activity stations for the event. Trees were planted by year 5, 6, and 7 Pupils from Stewartstown Primary School, St Mary’s Primary School Stewartstown and Ballytrea Primary School.</p> <p>Albeit on a slightly smaller scale and a more enclosed area the event welcomed 54 eager pupils guided by 6 teachers, with input from various sections of the local school community. A total of 60 trees were planted during the event, symbolising a collective commitment to growing environmental responsibility.</p>
<p><b>4.0</b></p>	<p><b>Other Considerations</b></p>
<p><b>4.1</b></p>	<p><b><u>Financial &amp; Human Resources Implications</u></b></p> <p>Financial (Tullyvar): Purchase of Trees, Canes &amp; Guards - £382.50  Sign - £125.00  Photography - £135  Event Ancillaries - £299  Total - £941.45</p> <p>Financial (Bellaghy): Training Fee - £150.00  Event Ancillaries - £60.00  Total - £210.00</p> <p><b><u>Human:</u></b>  The Sustainability, Recycling Education &amp; Biodiversity Team spent a substantial amount of time on the various forms of organisation, communication, preparation of the site and carrying out the activities.</p>
<p><b>4.2</b></p>	<p><b><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></b>  None</p>

4.3	<p><b><u>Risk Management Implications</u></b>  Risk Assessments were carried out prior to the tree planting events.</p>
5.0	<p><b>Recommendation(s)</b></p>
5.1	<p>Members are asked to note the content of this report</p>
6.0	<p><b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b></p>
6.1	<p>Appendix 1 - Event Photography (Pages 1 &amp; 2 Tullyvar, Page 3 Drumcairne &amp; Page 4 No Dig Demonstration, Bellaghy).</p>
6.2	<p>Appendix 2 - Social Media Posts.</p>