

<b>Report on</b>	MUDC Forest Schools Northern Ireland Launch
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Head of Parks
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Nigel Hill

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To update members on the recent launch of the Northern Ireland Forest Schools scheme on Monday 18 <sup>th</sup> September at Ranfurly House and Hill of the O'Neill, Dungannon.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	Mid Ulster District Council are currently assisting three local schools with this pilot scheme. The principle aims of the scheme are to increase both the child's and teachers perception and knowledge of the local environment, allowing both to gain new skills to take back to the classroom, the designated site is the Hill of The O'Neill.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<b>Dungannon Primary, St. Patrick's and Gaelscoil Aodha Rua are currently taking part in a 6-week scheme based at Hill of the O'Neill.</b>



### **Forest Schools are an exciting and inspirational experience for children.**

They encourage children to:

- Work as part a team, gaining new social skills.
- Build confidence and self-esteem, they also focus on the children’s motivation and concentration.
- Encourages children to explore all of their senses.
- Develop communication skills
- Promote observational improvements, helping children to identify flora and fauna, and encouraging them to enjoy the changing seasons.
- Promote increased respect for the environment.
- Allows teachers to gain a new perspective and understanding of the children as they observe them in a very different setting.
- Encourages children to bring their experience home and asked their parents to take them outdoors at the weekend and at school holidays.

Forest Schools incorporates aspects of history, geography and science, delivers an opportunity to develop thinking skills and personal capabilities, and has a strong emphasis on promoting numeracy and literacy. The initiative connects children to their outdoor environment, stimulating curiosity and inspiring a love of the natural world that is likely to remain long after the end of primary school. Teachers participating in the project are well supported with expertise and resources, and enjoy the project as much as the children.”

	<p>NIFSA is an independent charity registered in Northern Ireland. They promote Forest School ethos to educational establishments and like-minded organizations throughout the country.</p> <p>NIFSA trains on average 10 schools / community groups per year.</p> <p>From conception NIFSA have taken more than 7,500 children in Forest School sessions.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<p><b><u>Financial &amp; Human Resources Implications</u></b></p> <p>Financial: £6,000 shared allocation to scheme from Parks and Culture &amp; Arts budgets.</p> <p>Human: Existing staff resources sufficient to coordinate project support.</p>
<b>4.2</b>	<p><b><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></b></p> <p>N/A</p>
<b>4.3</b>	<p><b><u>Risk Management Implications</u></b></p> <p>N/A</p>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
	Report for members information purposes only.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	N/A