



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

## Education for Sustainable Development Newsletter

Welcome to the **March 2024** issue and **18<sup>th</sup> publication** of the Department of Education newsletter on **Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)**. We would like to thank all of those who have contributed. We hope that you enjoy this edition and will find inspiration, ideas, useful links and resources to help you to play your part in sustainable development.

You can read past issues of the newsletter [here](#) and [subscribe](#) to receive it directly into your inbox every quarter!

### **ESD in County Sligo and Tipperary – Calling All Educational Institutions!**

Do you attend, work for or collaborate with an educational establishment or institution in **Sligo** or **Tipperary** that is taking action for sustainable development? If so we would love to hear from you for the next issue of the ESD Newsletter!

### **ESD in Schools**

If you would like to share what your school is doing in the area of sustainable development and see it featured in future issues of the ESD Newsletter, please get in touch by emailing [ESD@education.gov.ie](mailto:ESD@education.gov.ie). Your school will receive a **€500 One-For-All voucher** from the Department of Education if we publish your piece!

# 1. ESD to 2030 Updates



[Back to top](#)

## a. ESD to 2030 – Funding for Schools and Organisations

The Department has delivered over €450,000 in funding to 190 schools for ESD projects on foot of a call issued in the September ESD Newsletter.

Details on the grantees and projects are available on the [Funding Call](#) section of the [ESD to 2030](#) webpage.

The Department will run a funding call for organisations in May 2025 and a separate call for schools in September 2025. Details will be published on the [ESD Funding Call](#) page on Gov.ie and in the May and September issues of the ESD Newsletter to which you can subscribe [here](#).

## b. Basic Biodiversity Online Training Programme for Schools



The **Citizens Assembly on Biodiversity Loss** recommended Basic Biodiversity training for non-teaching staff in schools (Catetakers/ Maintenance staff). The

Department has collaborated with Biodiversity Ireland to bring this recommendation to fruition and Biodiversity Ireland has now launched the training programme.



The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan has launched a free online training course '**Managing School Grounds for Biodiversity**'. The course can be accessed at <https://learn.biodiversityireland.ie/courses/schools>

Developed in collaboration with the Department of Education, the course is aimed at caretakers, groundskeepers, and anyone responsible for caring for school grounds. Through ten evidence-based actions, it guides you through different ways of helping biodiversity no matter the size of your school or the space availability.

From pesticide alternatives to plant lists, biodiversity-friendly mowing tips to ideas on getting the school community involved, this is an opportunity for anyone who wants to manage school grounds in a more nature-friendly way and engage pupils, students and staff along the way.

### **Schools and biodiversity**

On the island of Ireland, many of our habitats and species are in decline, including one third of our wild bees. This could affect the survival of our wild plants and many of our food crops. Now more than ever it is crucial that we change the way we manage every corner of our landscape to support the natural world.

Many schools are already doing work for biodiversity through establishing nature gardens, green teams, and working towards achieving Green Flags. Some examples of this work are featured in the course, as well as practical projects such as how to build raised beds, make a pollinator-friendly rainwater planter, plant trees and grow fruits and vegetables.

Dr. Úna Fitzpatrick, co-founder of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan said:

"We are delighted to launch this course in collaboration with the Department of Education. There are already schools all over Ireland making a massive difference for biodiversity. This course has lots of ideas for further evidence-based actions, and

it'll also help those who are starting out on their journey. Pollinator numbers are in decline, but local populations are increasing where actions are being taken to help them. This is a sign that biodiversity can bounce back if we give it a chance. If every school in Ireland took just one action, the impact would be huge - not just for biodiversity, but for the children who will then become passionate champions for nature.”

Dr. Aoibhinn Ni Shuilleabhain, Chair of the Citizens Assembly on Biodiversity Loss said “Schools are often at the heart of communities and there is no better place to begin nurturing and protecting our natural environment. This Biodiversity Training course for those managing school grounds will be hugely impactful on local nature and on all those in the school community who can be proud of the positive impact they are having on the environment. So much learning beyond the curriculum happens in schools and these actions to enrich biodiversity around schools will empower the next generation to conscientiously act for the climate and for the natural world that we depend on for all facets of life. As Chair of Ireland's Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss, it makes me hugely proud of the work that the people of the Assembly did to see another recommendation come to fruition.”

### **The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan**

The course has been produced by the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan in collaboration with the Department of Education. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is a framework bringing together different sectors across the island of Ireland to create a landscape where pollinators can survive and thrive. Its implementation is coordinated by the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

### **Find out more**

Link: <https://pollinators.ie/schools/>

[Back to top](#)

## **c. Curriculum Developments**

### **Leaving Certificate - Climate Action and Sustainable Development**

Congratulations to the 43 schools selected to deliver the new Climate Action and Sustainable Development Leaving Certificate subject from September 2025. A list of the schools is available at: [gov.ie - Minister Foley announces schools participating in phase one rollout of new Leaving Certificate subjects](#)

The new curriculum was published in September 2024 and is available to view here: [Climate Action and Sustainable Development | Curriculum Online](#)

## **Primary – Social and Environmental Education**

Social and Environmental Education (SEE) is one of the five broad curriculum areas in the new Primary Curriculum Framework which was launched in March 2023. Social and Environmental Education contributes to children’s understanding and development of the interconnected historical, geographical, and societal dimensions and processes of life.

It supports children’s awareness, appreciation and understanding of the world through learning about the rich diversity of peoples: their experiences, cultures, religions, beliefs, and environments in different times, places and circumstances. It helps children to develop an understanding of the human and natural environments and the relationship between them.

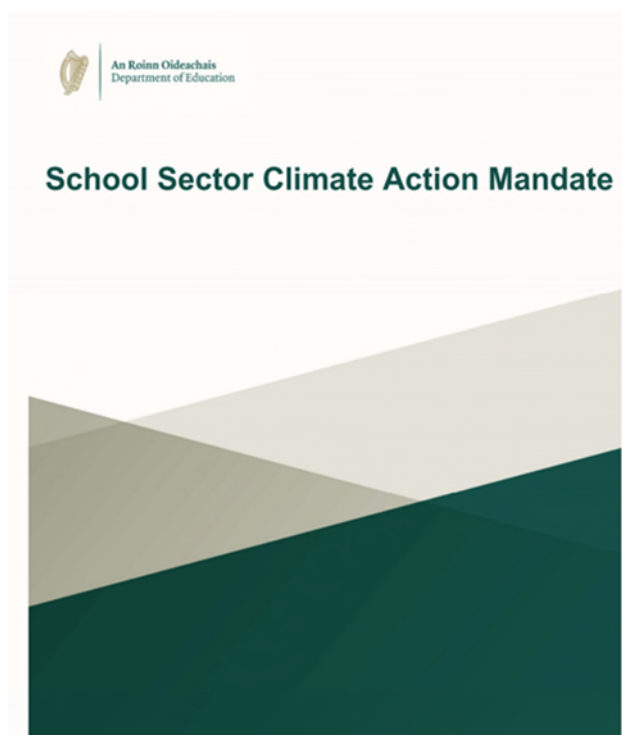
Through Social and Environmental Education, children develop the attitudes, concepts, dispositions, knowledge, skills, and values that motivate and empower them to become informed and active citizens who promote a more sustainable future. This is made more meaningful and empowering through children’s active identification, exploration and investigation of local, national, and global challenges and opportunities, past and present. Hence, children come to an understanding and appreciation of their inherent rights and responsibilities as custodians of this planet.

Public consultation on the draft SEE specification commenced in March 2024 and concluded in June 2024. The feedback from the consultation was subsequently analysed and two consultation reports were published in late 2024.

The curricula will be introduced from the 2025/2026 school year and implementation will be on a phased basis, over a 5 – 6 year period. Each of the five curriculum specifications, including SEE, will include a ‘Toolkit’. In addition, professional development opportunities will be provided to school leaders and teachers. The model of professional development is currently being considered.

[Back to top](#)

### **d. Updated School Sector Climate Action Mandate**



An updated School **Sector Climate Action Mandate** has been published.

The School Sector Mandate was updated to ensure it aligns to the Public Sector Mandate while recognising the differences between large Public Sector bodies and Schools.

The updated Mandate includes links to the School Sector Climate Action Roadmap and to the ESD to 2030 strategy.

Some of the topics in Section 3 of the Mandate were further developed including: Education for Sustainable Development, Managing Resources and Eliminating Waste and Procurement.

Some additional items were added to the Section on School Buildings including Monitoring and Reporting for Schools, Energy Management for Schools and the Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation Pathfinder Programme.

In the Section on Travelling to School, additional information on the Safe Routes to School scheme and School Transport 2030 were added.

The School Sector Mandate will be reviewed annually, following the annual update of the Public Sector Mandate.

Read the School Sector Climate Action Mandate here: [gov.ie - School Sector Climate Action Mandate](https://gov.ie/SchoolSectorClimateActionMandate)

The **Sustainability Toolkit** published in September 2022 was developed to support schools in adopting a Sustainability Policy Statement in accordance with the Mandate.

The Sustainability Toolkit consists of a self-assessment sustainability audit, sustainability guidelines and a sustainability policy statement template. Celebrate and share what your school is doing to support and promote sustainable development by developing your schools Sustainability Policy Statement and check out the A – Z in the guidelines for some great ideas to take action for sustainability! The toolkit is available [here](#).

ESCI held an information session on ESD and the Sustainability Toolkit on 24 October 2023. A recording of the event is available at: [ESCI - Education Support Centres Ireland - Primary and Post Primary Teacher events courses and webinars Ireland](#)

**Note: Schools who have published their Sustainability Policy Statement on their school website will be prioritised for ESD to 2030 funding.**

You can see, as an example, Árdcoil na Mara's Sustainability Policy Statement at: <http://ardscoilnamara.ie/page/Policies/64238/Index.html>

We plan to add links to more Sustainability Policy Statements on the [ESD to 2030 webpage](#) in due course.

If you have already published your statement and would like to share it, let us know – [ESD@education.gov.ie](mailto:ESD@education.gov.ie)

[Back to top](#)

## e. Solar Panels for Schools Programme update – March 2025

Since the launch of the first phase of the **Schools PV Programme** in November 2023, 1120 schools have been approved for funding with more than 1,020 installations confirmed as completed in Clare, Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Kilkenny, Leitrim, Limerick, Offaly, Waterford, Wicklow and the Dublin City Council area.

The second and final phase of the scheme opened for applications on 11th November 2024 to all remaining eligible schools in 16 counties – Carlow, Cavan, Cork, Dublin, Kildare, Laois, Longford, Louth, Mayo, Meath, Monaghan, Roscommon, Sligo, Tipperary, Westmeath and Wexford.

To date, almost 85% (2,263 schools) of those schools have expressed an interest in the scheme, with 97% (2188 schools) of those so far approved to apply for funding for the installation of solar PV in their schools.

For more details, please see: [gov.ie - Schools Photovoltaic Programme](https://www.gov.ie/en/schools-photovoltaic-programme/)

[Back to top](#)

## f. SDG Posters and Information Flyers for Schools

The Department issued two copies of a poster of the **17 Sustainable Development Goals** to all schools in September 2022, as well as a flyer with information on Ireland's **National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development: ESD to 2030**, and how to access resources for schools.

If you require additional copies of either the poster or flyer, please email [ESD@education.gov.ie](mailto:ESD@education.gov.ie).

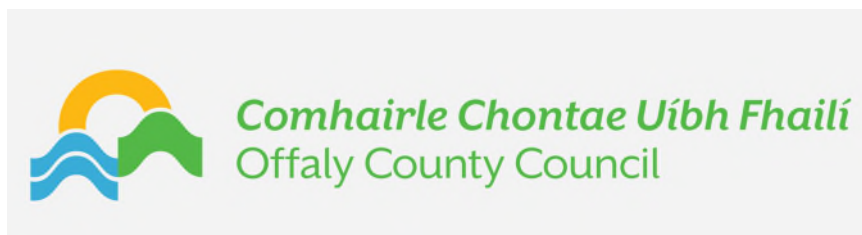


[Back to top](#)



## 2. ESD Around the Country – Offaly and Roscommon

### a. ESD in County Offaly



**Join NBS EduWORLD's  
#FosterTheFuture  
campaign**

Bring nature-based solutions into  
education & empower students to  
build a greener world!

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission.

**Offaly County Council** is dedicated to promoting environmental sustainability through a variety of initiatives aimed at primary and secondary educational institutions across the county.

We invite all schools to engage in a diverse range of programs designed to enhance environmental awareness and foster active participation in ecological practices.

The initiatives include:

### **Nature Based Solutions - NBS EduWORLD:**

Offaly County Council has been working with NBS EduWORLD (Nature Based Solutions) for some time now. NBS EduWORLD is funded by the European Union and aims to help facilitate the integration of Nature-Based Solutions into the education system.

### **What are Nature-Based Solutions?**

NBS are ‘solutions inspired and supported by nature, which are cost-effective, simultaneously provide environmental, social and economic benefits and help build resilience. NBS benefit biodiversity and support a range of ecosystem services.’

The Climate Action team will be collaborating with local teachers in schools in Offaly which will significantly benefit both teachers and their students to learn about the importance of nature-based solutions and how they contribute to a sustainable environment.

The main goal of the project is to enable a community of Nature-based solution professionals and education providers to effectively teach/incorporate NBS into the schooling environment, ensuring free and easy access to high quality NBS knowledge and resources.

The programme will be rolled out in a step-by-step process with the continued guidance and support of the Climate Action Team in Offaly County Council.

Continuing on in 2025, this initiative will support educators in bringing nature-based solutions (NBS) into the classroom and helping students develop the skills to build a sustainable future.

### **Green Schools:**

A programme that empowers schools to embark on a journey towards environmental excellence by adopting sustainable practices within the school community.

### **SDG Week:**

Climate Action in collaboration with ‘Education for Sustainability’ and Offaly Library Services facilitated workshops for teens during SDG Week in September 2024 with for local secondary school pupils. The workshops were held in Tullamore Library and Edenderry Library during SDG Week. A great discussion and exploration of important topics such as fast fashion, environmental awareness and SDGs ensued at both

workshops. In total there were over 25 events held and organised in the Offaly libraries who are key stakeholders in raising awareness of SDG with both school and public events.

Please get in contact with [climate@offalycoco.ie](mailto:climate@offalycoco.ie) to find out more.

[Back to top](#)

## b. ESD in County Roscommon

### **New Year, New Greenway**

A new Greenway just outside Ballyforan is on target to be opened to the general public in early in 2025, as works are progressing well on the 250-acre cutaway bog site at Caltraduff, on the Ahascragh road out of the Roscommon village.

Financed by a combination of EU Just Transition money and local matched funding, a local committee (the Ballyforan Area Transition Team) has been working on the project for almost five years and so the 3.2km loop, with an accompanying car park to accommodate over 50 cars, is set to be ready for use in the New Year.

The foundations have been put in place across the site for the Greenway, and a quarry dust finish will be applied to make it suitable for cyclists, runners, casual walkers and tourists alike, particularly those with an interest in the unique blanket bog landscape that surrounds the site.

The Greenway is part of 'The Bridge Bog Loop' plan, which aims to eventually connect the greenway with Ballyforan village, either through a safe walkway across the Ballyforan bridge, or by creating a new pedestrian crossing over the River Suck.

For further details, see [New Greenway scheduled for New Year – Roscommon People](#)

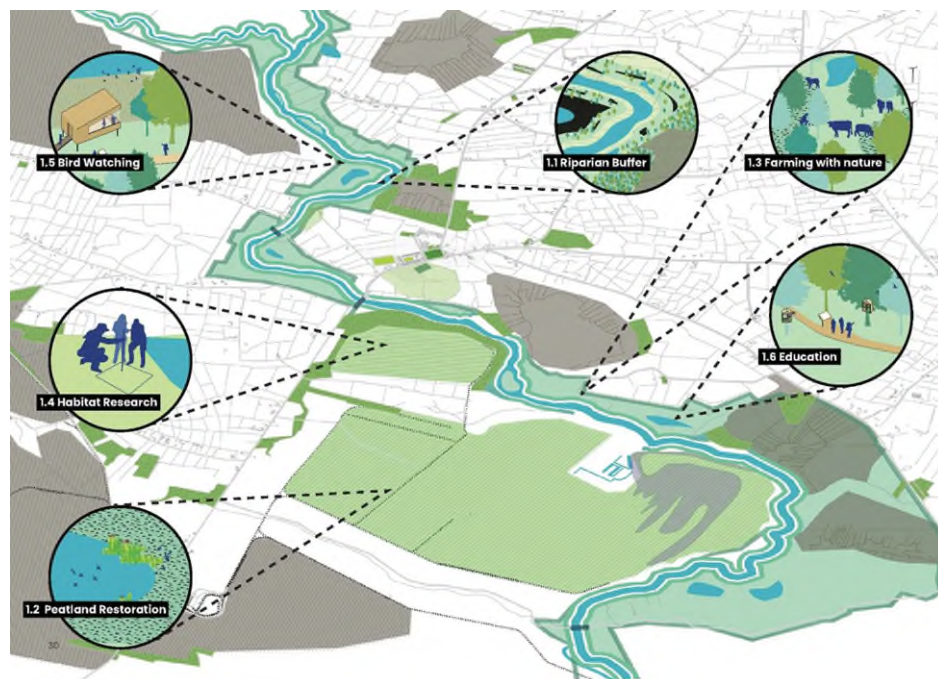
### **Ballyforan Transition Vision**

Ballyforan is a village rich in history that straddles the border between County Roscommon and County Galway, equidistant from major urban centres like Athlone, Ballinasloe, and Roscommon. Having grown substantially as a commuter village in the time leading up to the economic crash of 2008, the available community facilities have not grown to meet demand. Additional pressure has come with the loss of existing facilities and the phasing out of peat harvesting which provided employment in the area. These changes have catalysed the community into action to imagine a new future for the village. One that builds on the stories and history of the area and embraces the transition to a green and sustainable future.

ACT worked with to community to define the potential projects and interventions that could be implemented to make Ballyforan a net-zero community and to develop a

visitor destination with the concepts and stories of “Villagers and Vikings” “Abbey’s and Artisans” “Tea in the Bog and Taxing Forts” “Bridge to Bridge Walks” “Friendship & Fishing” “Beara Breifne and the Bog” Ringforts and Railways” linking the unique historic past to the present and an ecologically sustainable future.

The area around Ballyforan holds important ecosystems of international relevance. In particular the zone around the River Suck has importance habitats that are protected under EU law. The area has also been strategically important since ancient times as a taxing point as people moved from East to West. The village and surroundings retain the traces of historic settlements, landscapes and buildings that all help tell the story of the village. This provides an opportunity for Ballyforan to become a destination for historic preservation and ecological restoration.



**Above:** Ballyforan Nature Reserve

### 3. School Updates

**Editor's Note:** Thank you to all the schools who sent us in updates on their activities for ESD. There is great work going on all across the country; unfortunately we can't include all the submissions in the ESD Newsletter but here are two great examples:

#### a. Lights, Camera, Green Action! Sustainable Film-Making at Curraghboy National School, Athlone, Co. Roscommon



**Note:** This digital film-making and sustainability project was a collaborative project between 5 schools across Counties Roscommon, Longford, Offaly and Laois.

In schools like County Roscommon's Curraghboy National School, students have embraced sustainable practices throughout the filmmaking process. From using upcycled devices for filming to crafting props and sets with recycled and natural materials, every aspect of the project underscores the importance of sustainability. For example, improvised props were made using items such as cardboard, fabric scraps, and biodegradable materials, aligning with **SDG 13 (Climate Action)** by reducing the environmental/ carbon footprint of their film production. These practices teach students the value of resourcefulness and the impact of their choices on the planet.

The "Mini Motion Pictures" initiative exemplifies how education can incorporate sustainability into creative projects. This innovative program, supported by digital industry leaders such as Samsung Electronics and TransACT Technology Solutions, introduces primary school students to the art of filmmaking while emphasising sustainable practices. The program highlights the potential of upcycled, end-of-life devices from the Department of Education to create high-quality films, demonstrating how discarded technology can be repurposed to foster creativity and digital literacy.

This approach aligns with **SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production)** by promoting the reuse of resources and reducing electronic waste.

The "Mini Motion Pictures" initiative has not only made waves at Curraghboy NS but has also inspired creativity and sustainability in other participating schools, including Scoil Bhríde Mountrath in County Laois, Lanesborough National School and Sacred Heart Primary School in County Longford, and Boher National School in County Offaly. These schools embraced the program's ethos of eco-friendly filmmaking, integrating upcycled technology and sustainable practices into their projects. Each school brought its unique perspective to the initiative, highlighting the power of collaborative efforts in fostering environmental awareness and digital innovation among students

Curraghboy NS Student feedback:

*"It was fun singing with my friends on the class tv."* -1<sup>st</sup> class

*"I really liked working with Lee because Mini Motion Pictures sort of brought out the creativity of people."* - 4<sup>th</sup> Class

*"I loved seeing the drone that Lee used, we even got to edit some of the footage in class! We even got on the news!"* - 6<sup>th</sup> Clas

Sustainability in education thrives on partnerships between schools, local governments, businesses, and non-profits. Collaborative projects, such as the partnership between Curraghboy NS and Shuttermaniac Productions for eco-friendly filmmaking, highlight the transformative potential of working together toward shared goals. By leveraging such partnerships, schools can provide students with real-world experiences that underscore the importance of sustainability.

Embedding sustainability in education is not merely an option—it is a necessity. By aligning with the **SDGs**, schools can play a vital role in addressing global challenges and inspiring the next generation to create a more sustainable world. From green infrastructure to innovative projects like "Mini Motion Pictures," every step taken today contributes to a brighter, greener tomorrow.

Education is the foundation of sustainable development. Let's ensure that today's classrooms become the incubators of tomorrow's changemakers, ready to lead the charge for a sustainable future.



**Above:** Students and teachers at Curraboy National School at a Mini Motion Pictures screening.

- by Rory Leonard and Lee Williamson

[Back to top](#)

**Editor's Note:** Congratulations to all at Curraboy National School - keep up the good work! A €500 One-For-All voucher to support ESD projects is on its way to you!

## b. ESD at St. Ailbe's School, Tipperary



**St. Ailbe's Students Strive to Promote Biodiversity in their School**

“St. Ailbe’s school, Tipperary town is very proud to promote Biodiversity and Sustainability across the school body. Each year, the schools Transition Year students take on new environmental projects within the school in order to promote Biodiversity and Sustainability on the school campus and within our school community. Additionally, our students enthusiastically take part in the Sustainable Development Goals Take 1 programme

Various projects have been undertaken in recent years including the design and construction of a sensory garden in the school. The concept behind the garden was to build and plant a garden environment with the purpose of stimulating the senses. This stimulation occurs due to plants and the use of materials that engage one’s senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. Sensory gardens for schools not only stimulate student’s senses, but they also help promote a healthy emotional and mental well-being. Our students set about designing, constructing, painting and filling raised beds in the garden. These beds were filled with edible herbs, fruit and vegetables. Following on from this the students set about building pergolas as focal points in the garden and planted these with plants that are scented. Since the start of the project, the sensory garden has continued to evolve with native planting, fruit trees, seating areas and walkways.

Due to the overwhelming success of the sensory garden project, other biodiversity and environmental projects have started to develop within the school which link in well with our current work on getting a Green school’s flag for water. The aim of the school is to create educational spaces that nurture a love of nature, develops a knowledge of biodiversity and respect for nature. Through biodiversity education, our students will become aware of the impact of their actions on the environment and nature which includes all the living beings that live there. The biodiversity theme will help to connect students and the wider community with the natural environment and develop a value for the biodiversity all around us.

Our current transition year group have built a polytunnel with the aspiration of using the tunnel to teach students across the entire school about growing food crops, understanding soil health, crop rotations and develop an understanding and appreciation of locally grown food with regard to supporting Irish farmers and reducing climate change. Students were involved from start to finish in the project from digging foundations, to installing the frame, building and filling raised beds and cladding the structure. Produce from the tunnel will be used by the school Home Economics Department which will help to reinforce cross curricular development.

Students in St. Ailbe’s school have also had the opportunity to become involved in a range of activities such as building and installing bird houses, identifying native trees, installing bird feeding stations, planting insect pollinator friendly plants and bulbs and learning about pollinators and nectar sources.

The school is very fortunate to have a close working relationship with **Tipperary Tidy Towns** and our transition year students are working on a number of initiatives including litter picking on a weekly basis around Tipperary town. Students are very



proud to be involved in their community and a sense of pride in their community is very evident among students. Tipperary Tidy Towns have donated fruit trees and bushes to the school which we have planted as a biodiversity corridor on the school grounds.

St. Ailbe's school community is very proud of the achievements of our pupils for their Environmental work and this culminated in a group of students winning a Tipperary Garda Youth Award at a ceremony held in the Garda Training College in Templemore. School gardening brings learning alive, growing plants and being involved in the gardening process all contribute towards improving children's well-being. Gardening has helped to develop student personal achievement and pride. Currently transition year students are planning a mosaic for the garden as well as a water feature for the sense of sound. Our project is constantly evolving and it is planned to continue to develop over the coming years with the help of our students".

**Editor's Note:** Congratulations to all at St. Ailbe's - keep up the good work! A €500 One-For-All voucher to support ESD projects is on its way to you!

[Back to top](#)

## 4. Competitions

### a. ESD Art Competition



In September 2024, the Department of Education launched an Art Competition open to all primary and post-primary schools to encourage students to create an artwork exploring Education for Sustainable Development under the theme 'What Sustainability Means to Me'.

The aim of the competition was to encourage students to think creatively about how ESD is implemented in their school or local area and raise awareness of this important area.

The closing date for entries was Friday 1 November 2024, and 115 fantastic entries were received from schools all over Ireland!

Shortlisted entrants have been notified and the winners will be announced soon!

Details of the winners will be published on the [ESD to 2030 webpage](#).

[Back to top](#)

### b. December ESD Newsletter Competition - Winner

**The Question:**

From highest to lowest which type of transport is the most polluting on a 10Km journey in a city?

- a. Underground
- b. Bus
- c. Car
- d. Tram
- e. Bicycle
- f. Motorbike



**The answer: Car, motorbike, bus, underground, tram, bicycle.**

The winner of our December ESD Newsletter Competition was Scoil Íde, Clondalkin in Dublin and a prize of a €500 One-For-All voucher is on its way to the school for its ESD work. Congratulations!

[Back to top](#)

### c. ESD Newsletter - March Newsletter Competition

What proportion of the world's food is wasted or thrown away?

- a. 1/3
- b. 1/6
- c. 1/10
- a. 1/3**

N.B. This is more than 1.3 billion tonnes per year



To enter the March 2024 ESD Newsletter competition, simply answer the question above and email your answer with the subject line 'ESD Newsletter SDG 12'

Competition March 2025' along with the name of your school to [ESD@education.gov.ie](mailto:ESD@education.gov.ie) by 5pm on Friday, April 4<sup>th</sup> 2024.

[Back to top](#)

## d. BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition 2025



The **BTYSTE 2025** took place in the RDS in Dublin from 8 to 11 January. Over 4,000 students from over 352 schools across the island of Ireland showcased their innovation and ingenuity through the 2,069 project entries received for the BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition (BTYSTE) 2025. Tackling a broad range of topics relating to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), the 550 shortlisted projects represented their schools and local communities at the BTYSTE in January 2025.

### Department of Education ESD Award

The winner of the ESD Special Award at the BTYSTE 2025 was Áine O'Leary from St. Mary's Secondary School in Macroom. Áine's project was titled "Assessing Uptake and Impact: A study on the implementation of free lunch schemes in primary schools across Ireland".

Of her project, Áine writes:

"The current free lunch scheme was first introduced as a pilot programme in 2019 to 30 schools in Ireland. It is currently operating in over 2000 primary schools across the country. It is hoped that by 2030 all primary schools will be participating in the free lunch scheme [1].

Prior to beginning the research on the free lunch programme, it was hypothesised that parents, teachers, and principals had strong opinions about essential features of the programme, such as nutrition, portion sizes, and the number of leftovers produced. It was also predicted that students' initial excitement about the new

lunches had faded, potentially contributing to an increase in uneaten food being sent home. Furthermore, it was projected that some parents, principals, and teachers would see the initiative as a waste of money, arguing that the money could be better spent for other educational purposes.

To evaluate the hypotheses, four surveys were created to target the categories of people who are directly affected by the scheme every school day. The initial two surveys were intended for principals and teaching staff. These surveys sought to assess themes such as waste, nutrition, and whether participants believe the scheme is cost-effective. The third survey was issued to parents whose children attended primary school. The purpose of this survey was to see if parents were having difficulty with particular components of the scheme and if they truly needed it for their child or children. The final questionnaire was distributed to a group of primary school students from third to sixth class whose schools had recently implemented the free lunch scheme. This survey was designed to determine whether the children were enjoying the lunches given, or if the initial excitement had faded, perhaps leading to the initiative losing popularity and increasing food waste.

77.5% of parents are extremely satisfied with the amount of nutrition in the meals served, according to an analysis of the survey data. Furthermore, fewer than half of parents reported that their child or children typically have leftovers from the free lunch programme. Children who participated in the study gave the scheme an average rating of 3.2 out of 5. This might be a sign that children are losing interest in the programme, which would account for the excessive amount of food waste the programme produces. The free lunch scheme has several benefits, as evidenced by the fact that 72% of kids claim they have tried new foods as a result of it and that 82.6% of parents believe it should be implemented in all primary schools nationwide. Furthermore, 60.3% of teachers and principals believe the scheme offers good value for the money.

According to the information gathered from my surveys, it is advised that the government provide more precise guidelines regarding the nutritional value needed for the lunches, give parents the choice to enroll their children in or out of the scheme and let students choose between a hot and a cold lunch under the free lunch programme”

1. Jacqueline Hogge (2024) Special report: lifting the lid on the Hot School Meals Programme. Available at: <https://www.farmersjournal.ie/life/features/special-report-lifting-the-lid-on-the-hot-school-meals-programme-836430#:~:text=Under%20the%20programme%2C%20each%20qualifying,line%20with%20Public%20Procurement%20guidelines.>



**Above:** Department of Education official Karen Murtagh presenting Áine O'Leary with the 2025 ESD Award.

**Editor's Note: Congratulations to Áine on a great win!**

The Department held a 'Sustainability Actions' Competitions at its ESD Stand at the BTYSTE event and the winner of that competition and a €500 One-For-All voucher is Mount Anville School in Dublin 20. Congratulations!

[Back to top](#)

**e. Biodiversity in Schools – WIN Outdoor Wildlife Signs!**



Courtesy of 'Biodiversity in Schools' we have a pack of their Outdoor Wildlife Signs for Schools as a prize worth €375. You can choose any pack of your choice.

They are a wonderful tool to help young people learn about the biodiversity found around their school and are designed to be mounted around the school grounds for a fun, outdoor, active nature trail. They also come with supporting, digital resources for the classroom such as games and worksheets.

All you have to do is answer the following question to be in with a chance of winning. Visit the 'Biodiversity in Schools' webpage below. Search through the pictures. What is the only mammal featured/pictured? <https://www.biodiversityinschools.com/outdoor-wildlife-signs.html>

Answers to [ESD@education.gov.ie](mailto:ESD@education.gov.ie) before 5pm Friday, 28 March. The winners selected randomly from correct answers submitted.

[Back to top](#)

## f. Global Citizenship School - One -Minute Video 2024 – 2025



### **Want to visit Áras an Uachtaráin with pupils from your local school?**

In May/early June of 2025, GCS will be, once again be hosting a national showcase event, in Áras an Uachtaráin with Sabina Higgins and possibly President Michael D Higgins in attendance. GCS are planning on selecting 12 schools from around the Island of Ireland to attend. This year GCS are also accepting art, music, poetry or other creative content which shows your school trying to make our world a better place.

### **NEW Closing Date!**

April 20<sup>th</sup> /Easter school holidays is the closing date for entries to the Global Citizenship School 'One-Minute Video' school-sharing project. For more info check out the website One-Minute. See video tab at: [www.GlobalCitizenshipSchool.ie](http://www.GlobalCitizenshipSchool.ie)

[Back to top](#)

## g. Junk Kouture – Fashion Competition for Post-Primary – Win 2 tickets to the Dublin Final in May



**Junk Kouture** is a zero-cost programme which offers schools and students aged between 12 and 19 a creative way to become involved in active climate change initiatives, empowering them to lasting behavioural change. The World's First Sport for Creative Teens.

Junk Kouture challenges the next generation of Fashion Designers, Engineers, Climate Activists, Artists and Performers to envision, upcycle and create high end couture from recycled junk, before showcasing their design and representing their school on stages across the world. Junk Kouture is constantly evolving the educational materials available to both educators and students on issues of sustainability and circular economies to help them look beyond their Junk Kouture project and begin to apply the knowledge learned to all aspects of their lives.

Find out more here: <https://junkkouture.com>

If you and a friend would like to attend the Dublin City Final of Junk Kouture this May (details of which will be announced soon), please send an email titled 'Junk Kouture Competition' with your name, school address and contact details to [ESD@education.gov.ie](mailto:ESD@education.gov.ie) before 5pm on Friday, March 28th, and you could win two tickets to the event!

[Back to top](#)

## h. Irish Aid – Our World Awards





Now in its 20th year, the Our World Awards is a simple and flexible platform for 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class primary school pupils and their teachers to learn how Irish Aid, the Government of Ireland's International Development Programme, is working with partners around the world to create a fairer, safer and more sustainable world through the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Aligning seamlessly with the Primary School curriculum, Our World Awards offer teachers an exciting opportunity to inspire pupils to explore global citizenship, sustainable development and social justice through creative projects and classroom activities. The programme has been designed to help teachers cope with the demands of a packed curriculum. See the **free ready-to-use resources** including magazines, videos, and PowerPoint slides for your 3<sup>rd</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> class pupils at <https://ourworldawards.ie/teacher-zone/lesson-plans>.

Registered schools are now busy working on their entries, but you still have time to register and submit your entry! See further details on suggested categories and how to take part <https://ourworldawards.ie/take-part/>

**The closing date is 28 March 2025.** To celebrate Irish Aid's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, all entries will receive free SDG poster and Certificates for the Pupils in acknowledgement of their participation and work within GCE. Shortlisted schools will be invited to the **National Final in Dublin** where the **Overall School of the Year will win a class trip!**

Colleagues and partners at the Irish Aid Centre and Global Village are a fantastic support to pupils and teachers participating in the programme to help their understanding of the topics covered within the Our World Awards Programme.



**Above:** Gaelscoil Eois from Monaghan at 2024 National Final on hearing they had won Overall School of the Year 2024!

[Back to top](#)

## 5. Programmes and Resources

### a. Programmes and Resources from ECO-UNESCO



#### Environmental Workshops in Cork Region

ECO-UNESCO is excited to offer **free environmental workshops** for schools between now and April as part of their new Cork City regional pilot project, supported by Cork City Council. These engaging, hands-on sessions are tailored for young people aged 10-25 and cover a range of topics, including:

- Biodiversity and Ecology
- Marine Life
- Fast Fashion
- Food Production
- Waste
- Climate Action
- Student Leadership Training
- *More info on topics available [here](#)*

The workshops are interactive and linked to subjects like science, maths, and the arts, helping students build critical thinking, confidence, and resilience while exploring key sustainability issues.

Each workshop is:

- **90 minutes long**
- Delivered **in-person, online, or blended**
- Designed for up to **30 students per session**

Get in touch if you have any questions or register by emailing [bookings@ecounesco.ie](mailto:bookings@ecounesco.ie)

### **ECO-Dens: Young Environmentalist Awards Semi-Finals**

The **ECO-Dens** are the semi-finals of **ECO-UNESCO's** flagship programme, the **Young Environmentalist Awards (YEA)** - an all-Ireland eco-action programme empowering young people aged 10-18 to tackle environmental issues. At these regional events, groups pitch their environmental action projects to a panel of experts.

This year, over **320 projects** have been submitted from across the country! ECO-Dens will take place in the month of March at Airfield Estate in Dublin, the Old Cork Waterworks Experience in Cork, The Galmont Hotel in Galway, Lough Neagh Discovery Centre at Armagh, as well as online.

For more information on YEA, visit [www.yea.ie](http://www.yea.ie)

[Back to top](#)



[Back to top](#)

### **b. 'Know Your Nature' Video Series for Teachers – Biodiversity in Schools**



**Biodiversity in Schools** are have launched a new video series called “Know Your Nature”. 1 species. 1 minute. 5 facts.

While these are perfect for older classes they are primarily created these for teachers. From survey feedback last year it was found that while a lot of teachers had a strong interest in biodiversity, many didn't feel confident in their knowledge. Therefore, these videos are a nice, easy and fun introduction for even the most nature-averse!

Thanks again to the Department of Education for their support through the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development - ESD to 2030 to create the largest library of Irish biodiversity resources for schools.

Head over to the Biodiversity in Schools YouTube channel to view the first batch of videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLKVUNzwQlebEemNQCLYQXyNpQemNU8wbZ>

[Back to top](#)

c. Building a Greener Future – Programme for Post-Primary



## **Transforming Sustainability Education in Ireland's Secondary Schools**

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges of our time, and education is at the heart of tackling it. That's why *Building a Greener Future* was launched in partnership with Kildare Wicklow Education & Training Board, to empower Ireland's secondary schools with the knowledge and tools needed to create real change. Since its launch in 2021, the programme has engaged over 9,000 students and educators, encouraging a deep understanding of environmental challenges and inspiring collective action.

### **A Practical Approach to Climate Action**

*Building a Greener Future* programme focuses on key sustainability topics: climate change, waste management, water conservation, energy efficiency, biodiversity, and climate justice—while emphasising practical solutions students and schools can implement. What makes it special is its balance of theory and hands-on learning, encouraging students to think globally while acting locally. Every lesson ties back to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Students learn how to calculate carbon footprints, assess energy use, and brainstorm waste-reduction strategies. The programme also includes a robust activity bank, encouraging creative engagement in classrooms. Meanwhile, teachers are armed with resources to weave sustainability seamlessly into their lessons, helping to embed long-term change in the education system.

### **Making an Impact Across Ireland**

This programme isn't just about ideas; it's about results. Here's what it has achieved so far:

**Schools Involved:** More than 200 secondary schools in Ireland have participated since 2021.

**Students Reached:** Over 9,000 students have completed lessons by the end of 2024, walking away with the skills to make real changes in their homes and communities.

**Teacher Training:** Over 150 teachers have implemented the programme in their classrooms, using its ready-to-deliver resources to confidently teach sustainability in their classrooms without the need for additional training.

Feedback from participating schools underscores the programme's impact:

**Utility Reduction:** Over 95% of students feel that they better understand the importance of utility reduction.

Spreading Awareness: 80% of participating students felt they could teach what they learned in the lessons to others.

Mindset Shifts: Surveys show that over 70% of students feel equipped to apply what they learned and the course and that the course helped them make changes to their lifestyles.

### **What Teachers and Students Say**

The programme's impact is best described by those who have taken part:

*"I have found the programme to be beneficial by encouraging self - reflection, active participation in tasks both at home and in school. The programme provides useful links, demonstrations and worksheets for each module of the programme. The FSG Team are always supportive and on-hand for further advice and feedback while understanding the time pressures that teachers are under."* – Teacher from a participating school.

*"I enjoyed learning more about how I can change the way I act, how and what I can do to help the planet, and how to help other people understand."* – Transition Year student.

### **Fully Funded, Fully Inclusive**

The programme's achievements would not have been possible without the support of KWETB. Their funding has allowed schools to access the programme free of charge, eliminating financial barriers to participation. This funding ensures that schools in urban and rural areas alike benefit equally, promoting inclusivity and equity in sustainability education.

### **What's Next for *Building a Greener Future*?**

As we step into 2025, *Building a Greener Future* is ready to scale its impact across Ireland. Previously funded exclusively in Kildare and Wicklow, the programme will now be fully funded nationwide, offering schools across the country the opportunity to benefit from its approach to sustainability education.

To support this expansion, we've also introduced the [Educators' Sustainability Academy](#), a groundbreaking initiative designed to empower teachers to confidently deliver Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). This academy provides educators with the knowledge, resources, and skills needed to inspire meaningful change in their classrooms, schools, and communities.

Collaboration remains a cornerstone of the programme's success. By working closely with local councils, businesses, and environmental organisations, we aim to ensure that the programme not only reaches more schools but also addresses the unique sustainability challenges of different regions.

With nationwide funding and a growing network of passionate educators, *Building a Greener Future* is more than just a programme—it's a movement for lasting environmental and educational change.

## Why ESD Matters

The success of *Building a Greener Future* proves the transformative power of Education for Sustainable Development. It's not just about knowing the issues; it's about equipping individuals with the tools to solve them. By aligning with Ireland's commitments to the SDGs, this programme is building a generation of changemakers ready to lead us toward a more sustainable future.

[www.fiftyshadesgreener.ie](http://www.fiftyshadesgreener.ie)

[Back to top](#)

## d. Irish Aid Centre - Workshops and Resources for Primary



# Irish Aid

An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

The Irish Aid Centre offers free workshops and resources to primary and post-primary schools to help students understand global connections. Students will learn through interactive games and activities about the work of Irish Aid, the Government of Ireland's international development programme, around the world, and how Ireland is working to help achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

"I thought it was amazing. It really brought everything to life for the kids. They learned an awful lot about Irish Aid and the Global Goals. We have a range of children from different backgrounds, different countries and different cultures. A lot of them felt represented during the workshop and even learned a bit more about their cultures and their countries. I would really recommend this workshop to all schools."

- Firhouse ETNS

Workshops are suitable for primary students from 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> class, and for all post-primary students. The centre is located in Dublin city centre, however Irish Aid are also currently offering outreach workshops in the Galway area. Live online workshops for students and workshops are also now available as Gaeilge.

Primary Workshops – Students from 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class will learn about some of the countries supported by Irish Aid around the world. They will be introduced to the Sustainable Development goals through our giant board game, quizzes and activities. They will even get to try out the West African djembe drums. Students will



also learn how they can enter the Our World Awards, in order to continue their learning in the classroom and maybe even win a prize for their school. More details on the awards are available at [www.ourworldawards.ie](http://www.ourworldawards.ie)

Post-Primary Workshops - Workshops are suitable for Junior Cycle, Transition Year, CSPE and Senior Cycle Geography, Home Economics, Religion and Politics and Society. Workshops are also open to Leaving Cert Applied and Leaving Cert Vocational classes. Students will learn about Irish Aid's work globally, with a specific focus on Irish Aid's partnership with Zambia. Through videos, games and quizzes students will also learn about the Sustainable Development Goals.

Contact the Irish Aid Centre by email at [irishaidcentre@stand.ie](mailto:irishaidcentre@stand.ie) for further information or [fill out the booking form](#) to make a booking.

[Back to top](#)

## e. NEW ESD Programme for TY



A new 13-week programme for TY students has been developed by Grainne McKeever, an art teacher with a great interest in sustainability, with the help of a Department of Education ESD grant.

The programme '**Leadership for Sustainable Development**' focuses on sustainability and the fashion industry. The course is also recognised as part of the Gaisce Award if it is undertaken as an extra-curricular activity, but it can also be undertaken as a TY module within the curriculum. There is a free comprehensive work booklet available as part of the programme, with short chapters on the circular economy, fast fashion etc. There is also an action project element to this course, whereby students are encouraged to host a pop-up swap shop in their school, either

collecting clothes donations for students or working together with local charity shops to sell clothes on their behalf. There is a variety of additional resources in the back of the book, YouTube clips and websites for students to explore.

The course is currently being rolled out in ten schools and we would like to welcome other schools to take part, we have a limited number of free resources to offer schools before the booklets will need to be paid for by TY students.

Free online training and support for teachers is offered and questions regarding the course can be emailed to: [grainnemckeever@lucancc.ie](mailto:grainnemckeever@lucancc.ie)

[Back to top](#)

## f. WorldWise Global Schools – Making Local to Global Links at Rosary College, Dublin



*'I always thought that, oh, I don't have a lot of privilege. But [doing Global Citizenship Education] has completely changed how I look at things. People in some places don't even have running water, and I'm over here complaining that I don't have a phone charger.'*

- Kate Rock, Fifth Year student

Sustainable development requires long and short sight, both in time and space. Understanding that local actions can have global impact, and vice versa, is crucial to building responsible, compassionate global citizens. At Rosary College in Dublin, post-primary students and teachers are exploring these links between their own lives and the wider world, supported by a grant and training from WorldWise Global Schools\*.

Second year CSPE students surveyed the year group's fashion choices then researched the impact of Global North consumerism on workers in the Global South. They compared pay and working conditions in some Global South factories with those in Ireland. In response, they made clothes using recycled materials. This term they are running a 'No Buy' campaign to cut consumption across the school.

Leaving Certificate Applied students used the school garden to cut local food waste and explore global waste systems. They recorded all their waste, recycling and composting for a week. After researching how far their food travels, they created a world map showing food miles.

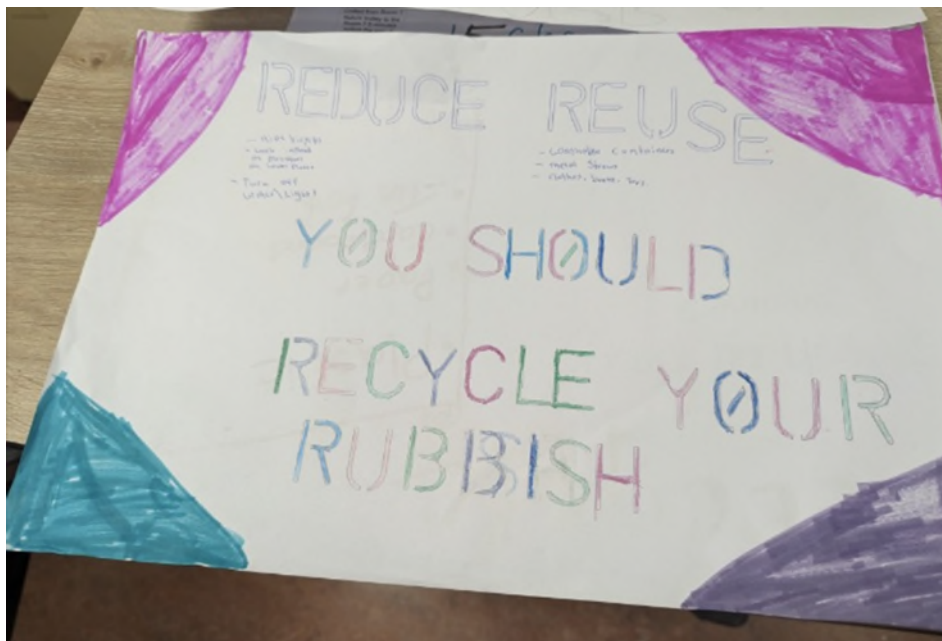
Students in Transition and Fifth Year have explored global biodiversity loss and the unequal impact on those in the Global South. They audited the school garden to gauge its biodiversity, and researched the benefits of each plant and insect, both locally and globally. With the Home Economics teacher, they prepared meals for

staff and students from the garden's produce to boost sustainability and cut food waste.

Grace McDermott and Donna Mullen, the two teachers who lead Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in the school, see how the students are gaining a sense of responsibility and empathy for the wider world. 'It's so important that [our students] relate well to each other and learn what we can do in Dublin, Ireland and the world to help solve global problems,' says Grace. 'The students teach their parents and they love getting involved.'

Donna observes that 'Our students are the future. They're going to be the leaders and decision makers, so we need an informed and active society. GCE does both. It educates our students and enables them to problem-solve and take action. They grow up knowing that the world is a bigger place than Crumlin. And with that comes the responsibility of acting as global citizens.'

\*Irish Aid's *WorldWise Global Schools (WWGS)* is Ireland's national Global Citizenship Education (GCE) programme for post-primary settings. See <https://www.worldwiseschools.ie/>



**Above:** Poster made by Rosary College, Dublin

[Back to top](#)

## g. Global Village – Programme for Primary Schools



### **Become the change and help us raise the next Global Citizens**

**Global Village** is a Global Citizenship Education (GCE) programme for primary schools in Ireland. It aims to support primary school pupils to become active global citizens committed to building a fairer and more sustainable world.

Engaging with teachers and school communities, Global Village is working to increase the reach, quality, accessibility, and effectiveness of GCE in primary schools. Global Village aims to do so through research, learning and establishing connections with key stakeholders in the GCE and Primary Education sectors.

Through increased reach, quality, accessibility and effectiveness of GCE in the primary education sector in Ireland, the programme supports educators and primary school pupils across Ireland develop a deeper understanding of the world in which we live.

Elisha Kelly, Global Village Programme Manager says:

*“As an active and creative educational process, GCE facilitates critical thinking and challenges perceptions and stereotypes. It supports learners, in age-appropriate ways, to make connections between their own lives and international social justice issues.*

*It encourages empathy, hope, reflection, participation, collaboration, and action for justice and positive change.”*

Elisha explains:

*“GCE is for everyone. Through age- and context-appropriate activities, learners engage in reflection, critical analysis of, and action on, global themes. GCE is relevant to many aspects of a person’s life. It is influenced by different roles played by a person, and different environments engaged with”*

Find out more at <https://globalvillageschools.ie> or email [info@globalvillageschools.ie](mailto:info@globalvillageschools.ie) to discover how your school can get involved in Global Citizenship Education.

Global Village is a strategic partnership between Irish Aid at the Department of Foreign Affairs, and a consortium of Dublin City University (DCU), Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO), Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN) and Trócaire.



[Back to top](#)

## h. Burrenbeo – Webinars

**burren**beo**trust**  
connecting people and place

**Title: Unveiling Cultural Treasures in Your Community**

**Facilitator: Dr Áine Bird, Burrenbeo**

**Date: 5th of March, 2025**

**Length: 50 min**

**Description:**

Unlock the rich potential of cultural heritage in your teaching! This session is designed to inspire and equip teachers with creative strategies, ready-to-use resources, and activity ideas to explore cultural heritage with their students. Dive into

the stories and traditions that define your local community's identity, discover practical ways to integrate cultural heritage into your curriculum, spark student curiosity, and foster a deeper connection to their surroundings. Transform the past into a powerful tool for engaging, meaningful learning experiences in your classroom.

**Title: Discovering Your Local Built Heritage**

**Facilitator: Mary Dillon, Burrenbeo**

**Date: 12th of March, 2025**

**Length: 50 min**

**Description:** Designed to empower teachers with the tools and resources to bring local history and archaeology into the classroom. Unearth the stories behind the historic and architectural gems near your school and inspire students to connect with the past through tangible, local examples. Bring history to life and help students form a stronger bond with their local Place.

For more information, please get in touch with [mary@burrenbeo.com](mailto:mary@burrenbeo.com)

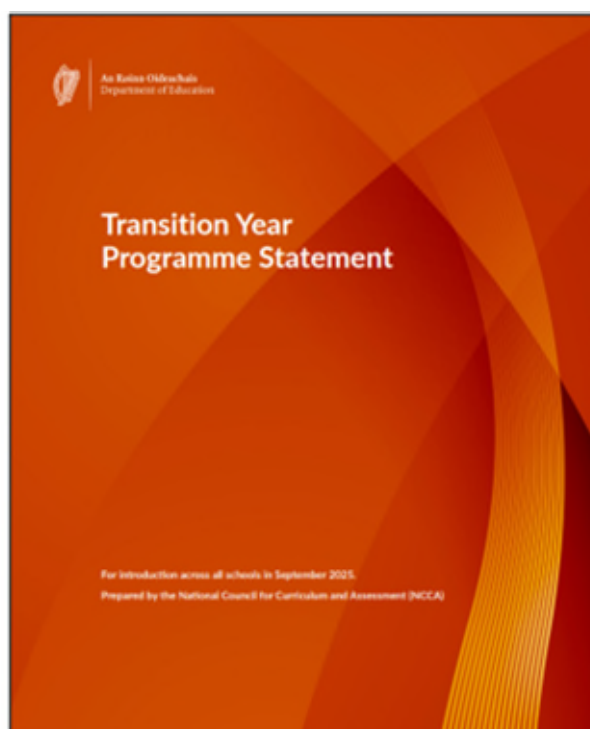
[Back to top](#)

## 6. CPD

### a. Oide – ESD Updates



### Oide's support for the Transition Year Programme Statement



The Transition Year programme offers opportunities for students to develop an understanding and awareness of civic and community concerns, encouraging them to adopt a more active and compassionate approach to citizenship. Students are taught participation skills in the creation of a more sustainable world. The new [Transition Year Programme Statement](#) rationale outlines the importance of worldwide sustainable living, with the student dimension: *Civic and Community Engagement* being one of the core foundations for the design of a school's Transition Year programme.

This student dimension offers guidance on how students can make a positive contribution to communities, schools and society. Their learning includes responsible action and exercising their rights locally, nationally and internationally in sustainable and ethical ways. One such student experience includes a *'meaningful action for a more sustainable world'* (NCCA, 2024, p.14).

To support the introduction of the new Transition Year Programme Statement (TYPS) into schools in September 2025, Oide is currently offering professional learning experiences and resources to support school leaders, TY Coordinators and teachers as they complete the audit of TY in their schools in preparation for the introduction of the TYPS in September 2025. Such professional learning experiences include a webinar, full day professional learning experiences for school leaders and TY Coordinators, online collaborative events for TY Coordinators, and online webinars and workshops for teachers, in addition to TY support provided during a school's senior cycle redevelopment whole-school professional learning day. The relevant professional learning materials and resources can be accessed on the [Programmes Support Transition Year](#) section of [www.oide.ie](http://www.oide.ie).

Oide's offering of professional learning to support Transition Year will continue over the coming years and ongoing updates can be received by joining [Oide's Post-Primary Transition Year Mailing List](#).

### **Oide and GAA: Future Leaders Transition Year Programme**

The 'Future Leaders Transition Year Programme' is a joint initiative by Oide and the GAA. It was established in 2016 and has grown into one of the largest TY programmes in the state with over 320 schools participating during the current 2024/2025 school year.

This cross-curricular programme comprises of a series of modules designed to encourage maturity, initiative, responsibility and leadership skills in students. As a leadership programme it equips students with the knowledge and skills to support all roles required in the effective staging of Gaelic Games events. As part of the programme, students are challenged to organise and run both on-field and off-field events in their schools, clubs and communities.

Among the modules available to schools participating in the Future Leaders Programme is a module on *sustainability*. The module has been designed to align with the GAA's Green Club Programme, in which the GAA champion the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and in particular SDG 3 (Good Health & Wellbeing), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 15 (Life on Land) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). This initiative aims to transform GAA clubs into centres of sustainability in their communities, broadening their positive influence beyond the physical benefits accrued by those who play Gaelic Games.



Reflecting a capacity to build partnerships, the Green Club Programme is a collaboration with the County and City Management Association (CCMA) and the Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) representing the local authority sector. Formal partnerships with expert organisations have been established across five themes of activity: Energy (SEAI), Waste (Regional Waste Authorities), Water (Irish Water, LAWPro), Biodiversity (National Biodiversity Datacentre) and Travel and Transport (National Transport Authority).

The Future Leaders' sustainability module utilises this expertise to provide eight lessons of content and activities covering the UN SDGs, the GAA Green Club Programme, and the five thematic areas of Energy, Waste, Water, Biodiversity and Transport. The module is underpinned by an understanding of the need to provide opportunities for young people to engage in the civic life of their schools and communities, while utilising the principles of education for sustainable development. The activities and the end of module task are designed to allow students the opportunity to progress their work and enter Eco-Unesco's Young Environmentalist Award.



[Back to top](#)

## b. Geoscience for Leaving Certificate Teachers CPD Course



### **Newly Released Geoscience Resources Co-created by Teachers and Geoscientists**

Part of the Get into Geoscience programme, the "Geoscience for Leaving Certificate Teachers" CPD is a well-established initiative connecting educators with practising geoscientists. Together, they co-create innovative, curriculum-focused teaching resources. Now in its fourth year, the programme has helped teachers build confidence in teaching key geoscience topics while equipping them with classroom- and field-ready materials tailored to the Irish curriculum.

We are excited to announce the release of new geoscience teaching resources co-created through this collaborative initiative. Developed by teachers and geoscientists working together, these materials ensure accuracy and relevance to current geoscience research, while remaining practical and accessible for classroom use. The new resources cover critical topics such as coastal erosion, the changing role of peat, and radon, providing engaging, research-informed content designed to support Leaving Certificate and, in some cases, Transition Year, teaching. These resources are tailored for Geography and the recently introduced Climate Action and Sustainable Development subject.

Teachers interested in accessing these new resources or participating in future CPD opportunities can find more information at [www.getintogeoscience.com/](http://www.getintogeoscience.com/). The CPD programme is completely free and runs over six evenings annually between September and December. It is run by [iCRAG, the Research Ireland Centre for Applied Geosciences](#) and [Geological Survey Ireland](#). Join us in bringing cutting-edge geoscience into classrooms and field trips across Ireland!

[Back to top](#)

c. Education Support Centers Ireland (ESCI) – Spring CPD Itinerary

# EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CPD SCHEDULE.

WHO WHEN WHAT

JAN - APRIL 2025

The January to April 2025 ESCI list of courses is now available at:

[ESCI Education for Sustainable Development CPD Spring 2025.pdf](#)

[Back to top](#)

## d. ISSN ESD CPD Schedule – Spring 2025



### Join the ISSN's Exciting Spring CPD Sessions!

The ISSN, in collaboration with experts from across Ireland, is thrilled to present a new and dynamic CPD schedule tailored to teachers' needs. The sessions provide up-to-date insights, along with engaging, hands-on activities for the classroom.

This year, exciting new collaborations will be introduced including **Zero Waste** with Alex from Understory, **Fast Fashion** with Change Clothes Crumlin, **Fair Trading** with Self Help Africa, and **Becoming a Nature School** with Nature Heroes—plus many more! Each session is designed to equip teachers with practical, impactful resources to support your ESD journey.

Looking for a specific topic? Get in touch [here](#) and the ISSN will do their best to find the right facilitator.

View the full schedule at [www.issn.ie](http://www.issn.ie)

## **Partnerships for Leaving Certificate Climate Action and Sustainable Development**

Education for Sustainability, Global Action Plan Ireland, ISSN and Junior Cycle Short Course for Climate Action are forming a partnership to support teachers in CASD pilot schools. CASD teachers were surveyed and 94% wanted more support beyond what is already provided, and they wanted resource planning among teachers in the 42 pilot schools to be coordinated to improve educators' confidence, prevent duplication, reduce workload, improve output quality, and enhance the learner experience. Based on feedback from CASD teachers the coordinating group will curate and design resources and CPD, in collaboration with universities and educational organisations, which will be delivered through ESCI.

WorldWise Global Schools will be hosting the first training session on 26 February from 7-8pm. For details please contact [irishschsusty@gmail.com](mailto:irishschsusty@gmail.com)

If you are an educational organisation that would like to support CASD schools please contact [sue@educationforsustainability.ie](mailto:sue@educationforsustainability.ie) or [irishschsusty@gmail.com](mailto:irishschsusty@gmail.com)

[Back to top](#)

## 7. HEI Sector

### a. Enacting ESD in Trinity: A Clear Vision, A Meandering Journey, and a Legacy to be Agents of Change

For the past two years, Trinity College Dublin has been working towards delivering on its strategic objective for Education that *“all Trinity students and staff be empowered to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to act as agents of change, individually and collectively, in working for sustainable development within planetary boundaries.”* Trinity’s strategy further commits to curriculum renewal – whereby all Trinity programmes will address Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) – and capacity building of educators to affect such pedagogical change with a focus on transformative learning.

One key strategic action within Trinity’s ESD journey was to develop a common interdisciplinary module which addresses ESD themes and develops key competencies for sustainable development. Designed by an interdisciplinary team of ESD Fellows, in collaboration with undergraduate and postgraduate ESD Student Interns, this module entitled “Enacting ESD” can be adapted for integration within all undergraduate (UG) / postgraduate (PG) curriculum, and within staff professional development programmes. In 2024, almost [six hundred business students](#) had the opportunity to experience this new module. In addition, two iterations of a professional development module have been delivered to approximately 60 staff, representing most of the 24 Schools in Trinity, from across all three faculties, reflecting a recognition for the need for ESD capacity-building across disciplines.

In 2025, Trinity is expanding its commitment to ESD by extending its interdisciplinary ESD team to build upon the success of engagement and action from staff and students to date. Recognising that there are multiple pathways to embedding ESD, future work will focus on mainstreaming and embedding ESD across undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum. This approach will focus on balancing institutional strategic direction with academic autonomy and professional creativity, empowering and supporting staff to enact their own approach to embedding ESD within curriculum. Key initiatives include:

1. Expanding professional development opportunities and supports for staff, with a particular focus on our ESD Community of Practice.
2. Capturing current ESD activities and practice across College.
3. Identifying the mechanisms to support embedding ESD in the UG and PG curriculum.
4. Exploring multiple avenues for making appropriate elective modules accessible to UG students.

It is through this combination of initiatives that Trinity recognises how it can maximise its responsibility to embed ESD in the curriculum and help students and staff recognise that they are agents of change both in their personal and professional life as graduates of Trinity.



**Above:** Launch of Trinity Sustainability Strategy 2023-2025 (January 2024)

## b. Colleges Go Green – Retrofitting of Further Education and Training Colleges

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Patrick O'Donovan and Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications Ossian Smyth has announced funding of €60 million to drive energy efficiency and decarbonisation in Further Education and Training (FET) buildings.

For the first time in the FET sector, the Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation Pathfinder Programme will seek to reduce carbon emissions, enhance energy performance and build capacity to ensure they lead by example in the transition to a sustainable future.

Co-funded under Project Ireland 2040 by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications through the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), this initiative is part of Ireland's Climate Action Plan.

The initiative is modelled on the lessons learned from the successful Pathfinder Programme in Higher Education, the Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation Pathfinder Programme (EEDPP) for Higher Education Institutions, of March 2020.

For more details, visit: [gov.ie - Minister O'Donovan announces funding of €60 million to drive energy efficiency and decarbonisation across the FET sector](https://www.gov.ie/en/news/2024/03/minister-o-donovan-announces-funding-of-60-million-to-drive-energy-efficiency-and-decarbonisation-across-the-fet-sector)

[Back to top](#)

## c. HEA Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Spotlight Series



The [HEA's ESD Spotlight Series](#) is designed to bring together higher education institutions across the Island of Ireland to showcase inspiring and innovative ESD initiatives. This online series aims to highlight the critical role of higher education in embedding sustainability across curricula, research, and campus practices. Each session will feature a different institution sharing their unique approaches to advancing ESD and responding to the SDGs, providing valuable insights for leaders, educators, researchers, and those supporting teaching and learning.

This series celebrates the vital role of higher education institutions in embedding ESD and responding to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through curricula, research, and campus practices, addressing key global challenges and driving transformative action that benefits students, academic communities and society

Running from February to October 2025, each week a featured institution will share its unique and creative approaches to ESD, highlighting initiatives across a wide range of disciplines to inform policy and practice, providing insights for leaders, educators, researchers, and those supporting teaching and learning.

The first national roll out of the HEA National Forum Digital Badge ‘Embedding the SDGs across the Curriculum’ took place between October 2024 and January 2025. The design and development of the digital badge was a collaboration between ATU, TU Dublin, SETU, UCC, DCU, and UG, with contributions from MTU, TCD, and MU during the roll out. Well done to the first cohort who completed the badge! See <https://opencourses.ie/opencourse/embedding-the-sdgs-across-the-curriculum/> for more details. The next national roll out will be in October 2025 For full details and the event schedule, visit <https://hub.teachingandlearning.ie/esd-spotlight-series/>

[Back to top](#)

#### d. **NEW** Online FET SustainABILITY Awareness course - SOLAS and Fifty Shades Greener



#### **Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board launches new online FET SustainABILITY Awareness course in partnership with SOLAS and Fifty Shades Greener**

SustainABILITY Awareness, a new multilingual online Further Education and Training (FET) Green Skills programme has been launched in tandem with the first National Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy for the Green Transition, which sets out the direction for the Irish FET sector’s response to emerging green skills needs.

Developed by Kildare & Wicklow Education and Training Board (ETB) in partnership with SOLAS, the further education and training authority and Fifty Shades Greener, SustainABILITY Awareness provides flexible and fully funded online learning. Available in a variety of languages the programmes are designed to empower learners with the skills to discover how their actions impact the environment and discover practical ways to adapt sustainable habits in daily life.

Delivered in Irish, Polish, Ukrainian and English, SustainABILITY Awareness is open to everyone and forms part of a national suite of national Green Skills programmes.



Delivered across the country by the network of 16 ETBs, this suite of Green Skills FET provision to progress the green transition in the FET sector in Ireland, with the aim to ensure every FET learner is equipped with the skills to become agents of change in climate action.

Commenting on the launch, Eileen Cullen, Training Manager with Kildare & Wicklow Education and Training Board (ETB) said: “Kildare & Wicklow ETB is delighted to partner with SOLAS and Fifty Shades Greener to bring our new SustainABILITY Awareness course nationwide. With this online Green Skills FET offering we can all do our bit to help the planet, and I would encourage anyone who is interested in exploring the steps they can take to adopt more sustainable practices in their everyday lives to contact us at Kildare & Wicklow ETB.”

Dr. Susan Gill, SOLAS Manager of Climate Strategy & Skills added: “The importance of FET in the fight against climate change cannot be understated. SustainABILITY Awareness is an exciting new Green Skills FET offering and a great example of our first National Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy for the Green Transition at work, as we seek to empower learners to support and accelerate the Green Transition.”

“The collaborative partnership between SOLAS, ETBs such as Kildare & Wicklow ETB and industry has been key to delivering this targeted Green Skills lifelong learning programme.”

Raquel Noboa, Founder and CEO, Fifty Shades Greener concluded: “Sustainable development requires that we change the way we live, the way we work and the way we act. Collaboration and creating true partnerships with organisations such as SOLAS and Kildare & Wicklow ETB help us to empower learners to reduce their environmental impact and improve their social impact.”

“The SustainABILITY Awareness programme has been developed to build skills and knowledge in the areas of climate action and to inspire learners to adopt sustainable practices.”

Find out more about the SustainABILITY Awareness course at <https://www.greenskillskwets.ie/solas-sustainability-for-beginners> and you can also discover FET Green Skills courses delivered nationwide through the network of 16 ETBs at <https://www.solas.ie/programmes/green-skills/>

ENDS

Contact: Laura Pakenham, 086 0354546 Email: [laura.pakenham@solas.ie](mailto:laura.pakenham@solas.ie)

Notes to Editors:

### **SustainABILITY Awareness Course**

The overall aim of this programme is to raise awareness of how human activities impact the environment and to inspire learners to adopt sustainable practices. It focuses on key areas such as climate change, resource conservation, waste

management, and social equity, highlighting how individual actions can support the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and contribute to a more sustainable future. The programme will be offered in the language of English, Irish, Polish and Ukrainian.

#### Key Details:

- **Course Duration:** 2 hours
- **Topics Covered:** Climate change, Biodiversity, Energy and Water Conservation, Waste reduction, Social Justice, Diversity & Inclusion and more.
- **Languages Available:** Ukrainian, Polish, Irish and English
- **Cost:** Free of charge
- **Start Date:** Registrations are open now, and the programme begins next week.
- Find out more about the course: <https://www.solas.ie/programmes/green-skills/>

#### About SOLAS

SOLAS is the state agency responsible for Further Education and Training (FET) in Ireland. Our vision is to power the potential of individuals, communities and enterprise through lifelong learning and workforce transformation. In recent years we have led an ambitious FET Strategy [Transforming Learning](#) and together with key partners the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) we have driven change across the FET system – providing easier access; simplified pathways; a consistent learner experience; and a stronger identity. Find out more at [solas.ie](https://www.solas.ie).

[Back to top](#)

#### e. **NEW** Course - Atlantic Technological University, TU Dublin and SETU



Ollscoil  
Teicneolaíochta  
an Atlantaigh  
  
Atlantic  
Technological  
University



**SE  
TU**

Ollscoil  
Teicneolaíochta  
an Oirdheiscirt  
  
South East  
Technological  
University

A new Open Course, '**Education for Sustainability**' will be running from February 2025. This fully online course is a partnership between ATU, TU Dublin, and SETU. It is a free course open to all staff currently working in tertiary education in the Republic of Ireland, subject to the availability of places.

ATU's Postgraduate Certificate on Education for Sustainability commenced again in January 2025 with a diverse disciplinary cohort. The Postgraduate Certificate will be facilitated up until May using a combination of online workshops and an in-person celebration, all framed by the 6 Cs model of Curriculum, Campus, Community, Collaborative Research, Culture, and Care. See <https://www.atu.ie/courses/certificate-education-for-sustainability> for more details.

ATU are participating in the SOS-UK International Responsible Futures Programme for 2025. This is a whole-institution supported change programme and accreditation process to embed sustainability across all aspects of student learning. See <https://www.sos-uk.org/project/responsible-futures> for more details.

ATU's Galway-Mayo Centre for Sustainability was designated an AASHE Centre for Embedding Sustainability across the Curriculum, joining TU Dublin and Franklin University in Switzerland as the only 3 such centres in Europe. See <https://www.aashe.org/partners/centers-for-sustainability-across-the-curriculum/> for further details.

[Back to top](#)

## f. DCU Climate and Society Newsletter – Issue 30



The new issue of **DCU's Climate and Society Newsletter** has been published!

The DCU Institute for Climate and Society is a research institute focused on social science and humanities perspectives on the climate crisis, and a community of scholars with expertise in media, communications, political science, policy, education, ethics, business, and the environmental humanities. Find out more about the Institute [here](#).

To read the newsletter, see [Institute for Climate and Society Newsletter #30](#)

[Back to top](#)

## 8. International Updates

### a. UNESCO – Japan Prize on Education for Sustainable Development



UNESCO have just launched the Japan Prize on Education for Sustainable Development.

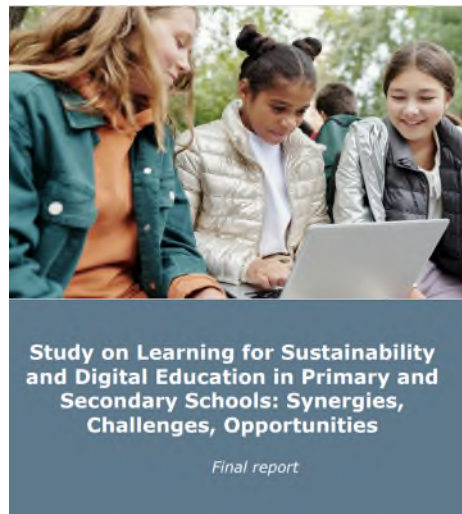
Funded by the Government of Japan, the Prize rewards exceptional projects and programmes undertaken in the field of Education for Sustainable Development. It consists of three awards of **USD 50,000** for each recipient.

Further information, including a user guide and answers to Frequently Asked Questions, can be found on the Prize website: <https://en.unesco.org/prize-esd>.

Each member state can submit up to three nominations. Details of the National Selection process will be published on the [ESD to 2030](#) webpage in the coming weeks.

[Back to top](#)

## b. EU Publication of Report on Learning for Sustainability and Digital Education in primary and Post-Primary Schools



This study investigates the relationship between learning for sustainability and digital education in formal education settings, seeking to identify synergies, challenges, and opportunities for practitioners and policy makers. It proposes pathways for harnessing digital technologies in support of learning for sustainability and in ways that can contribute to improving learner outcomes in schools. Specifically, it seeks to offer insights into how best to combine educational policy, action and investment in these areas.

The study shows how green and digital agendas are not always natural allies. Nevertheless, examples exist of how education authorities, teacher education institutes and schools can engage with the twin agendas effectively. There is still much to be done so that they can be mutually reinforcing and empower learners, teachers and schools to make changes for a green and digital future.

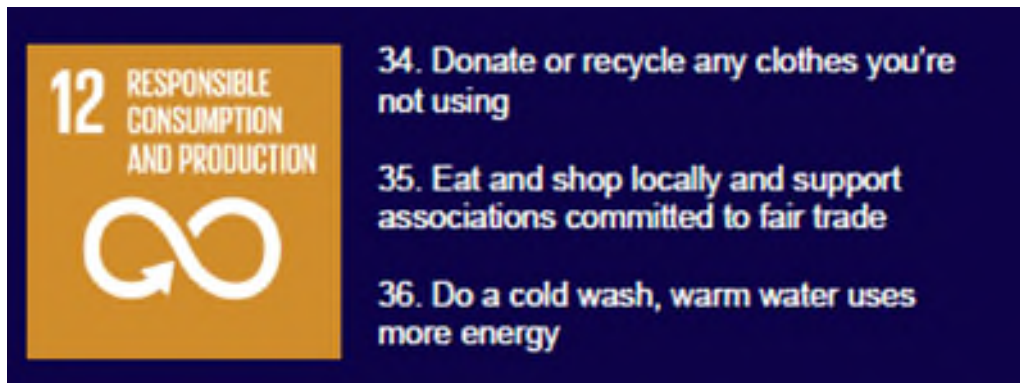
See: [Learning for Sustainability and digital education in primary and secondary schools](#)

[Back to top](#)

## 9. Other News

### a. Three Simple Actions – SDG 12

Below are three simple daily actions you can take to support **SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production**



### b. EPA – State of the Environment Report 2024



The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently published the State of the Environment Report 2024, outlining the current state of our environment at a strategic level, it also provides an update on the environmental challenges that we face, nationally and globally.

This is the eighth report from the EPA marking nearly three decades of rigorous assessment. of Ireland's environment – our air, waters, soil, biodiversity and how our society impacts on it.

The report also provides mid-term commentary on the many plans and programmes in place that have 2030 in their sights (e.g. Climate Action Plan Sustainable Development Goals)

The report concludes that while some welcome progress is being made on climate action, we are still well-off track in meeting our 2030 targets. *“For us as individuals and as a society, our task now is to address the challenges set out in the report so that the next generation does not have to. We have much to do, but by acting now*

*we can make good in providing a healthy, clean and resilient environment for ourselves and for future generations”.*

Read the report here: [Ireland's State of the Environment Report 2024 | Environmental Protection Agency](#)

[Back to top](#)

### c. Cycle Right at the Central Model School and Scoil Chaoimhín



The children in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class in Scoil Chaoimhín and the children in 5<sup>th</sup> class in Central Model Senior School participated in the Cycle Right Programme on the grounds of the Department of Education. Cycle Right is a cycling safety programme aimed at primary aged children from 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class. Children learn the fundamental cycling skills and key safety tips to cycle safely on quiet roads. The children learn competency skills such as bike handling, correct use of helmets, cycling signals and traffic lights. The children in both schools really enjoyed the experience. One child in Scoil Chaoimhín said “I really liked spending time outside and learning new skills”. Another child said, “It was great to learn the safety rules and learning how to correctly cross over a roadway on the bikes”. One child was delighted that they had the opportunity to “learn how to cycle a bike for the first time”. The teacher was also felt the programme was very beneficial and said that “some children have never cycled before, and it gave them a chance to learn in a safe space. It gave them real world scenarios and they practiced many different techniques which is hugely important. It also showed the children the basics of the rules of the road and how to put them into practice”.

[Back to top](#)

## d. Swift Boxes in the Department of Education, Tullamore



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

The Department of Education has recently installed a number of swift boxes in its premises in Tullamore. According to the [Offaly Swift Survey \(2023\)](#), twenty-five nests were recorded compared to 30 in 2017, indicating a slight drop in Swift breeding numbers overall. It is hoped that this project, which was guided by engagement with Offaly Biodiversity Officer and OPW architects, will reverse this trend and increase the number of nest sites in the Tullamore area.

The Swift is a migratory bird and spends most of the year outside of Ireland (see Fig 1 below). In Ireland, as well as most of Europe, the breeding season begins in the last week of April or the first week of May. A completed clutch typically contains one to three eggs. Incubation of a single egg lasts between 19 and 21 days. Chicks fledge 36 to 49 days after hatching, and the adult swifts depart the nest within a few weeks after the last chick has fledged.







**Above:** Newly installed swift boxes on the Department of Education Campus, Tullamore.

[Back to top](#)

#### e. INTO Consultative Conference on Education – Focus on ESD



The 2024 **Consultative Conference on Education** took place on Friday 22 and Saturday 23 November in Clayton Whites Hotel, Wexford. The conference theme was ***Sustaining Teachers, Sustaining Education***. Approximately 400 delegates and guests attended

In her opening address INTO President Carmel Browne stressed the relevance of sustainability in all aspects of modern life and the primary school curriculum. She also how vital it was for teachers to be valued and supported and to feel that their profession was sustainable.

Alice O'Donnell, Education Committee Cathaoirleach, encouraged attendees to take time to reflect on their priorities in sustaining themselves in teaching, and spoke of the broad range of roles teachers take on both inside and outside their classrooms.

Máirín Ní Chéileachair, INTO Director of Education, Equality, Research and Learning commented on the impossibility of separating the teaching of sustainability and the sustainability of the teaching profession.

Mary Immaculate students Ellen McCluskey, Rebecca Banville and Shireen Rountree, all INTO members, presented their research on sustainability undertaken for the M.Ed. in Education for Sustainability and Global Citizenship.

Dr Anne Dolan from Mary Immaculate College, gave a thoughtful keynote on Friday evening entitled *Celebrating sustainability stories within and beyond our school communities*. Dr Dolan encouraged delegates to celebrate practices already underway in schools and stated that 'primary schools are punching above their weight' when it comes to sustainable initiatives. She highlighted the positive role schools can play in addressing the disconnect with nature that can be a consequence of our modern online society and advocated for schools to publicise their sustainability work within their communities.

Delegates were allocated to one of four discussion groups to consider questions on sustainability and practical ideas for implementing it in their classrooms, schools and communities. The opportunity to discuss professional issues with colleagues is always appreciated by those attending the conference, and the discussion groups attracted many positive comments from participants.

On Saturday morning delegates attended two workshops, from a choice of eight.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Presenter/s</b>
<b>Restorative Practice – Building Relationships through Positive Communication</b>	Michelle Stowe, Connect RP
<b>Exploring ESD Skills Through LEGO Serious Play: A Workshop for Primary School Teachers</b>	Nico Lorenzutti, TESTEd
<b>Environmental Sustainability in Education: New eyes to see</b>	Paul O'Donnell, Wild Schools
<b>Self-Care for Teachers</b>	Sarah O'Brien, Jigsaw
<b>Stranger Danger: An inclusive classroom in a partially racist society!</b>	Maurice Hurley/Triona Collins, Global Citizenship Schools

<b>Researchmeet</b>	INTO Bursary Winners 2024
<b>Sustainability in the Social and Environmental Education Curriculum</b>	Aoife Mullen/John Copley, NCCA
<b>Sustaining Teachers and Sustaining Education through Global Citizenship Education</b>	Claire Glavey, Global Village

[Back to top](#)

Saturday's keynote address was given by Deirdre Hodson, who works in the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture in the EU Commission. She addressed the conference on *Learning for Sustainability in school education: A European perspective*, highlighting initiatives across the EU in the area of sustainability. Deirdre encouraged attendees to investigate EU funding opportunities such as Erasmus+ which facilitates contact with peers in other countries. She stressed the need for education systems to adapt for climate change and the desire of students to contribute to climate solutions.

The Conference was a great success with many positive comments from delegates, including the following:

- *The focus on sustainability was excellent and really, really, important. Also, the angle taken, looking at celebrating what is already happening, rather than overwhelming teachers with the sheer extent of the climate and biodiversity crisis which we are facing. Good selection of workshops. Great to have input directly from the NCCA.*
- *Keynote speakers excellent. The workshops were fantastic. The discussion groups gave delegates a chance to discuss and share what's happening on the ground.*

Thanks are due to all presenters and workshop facilitators, as well as the members of the Education Committee, the INTO interns and members of the local Wexford branch of the INTO.

[Back to top](#)

f. Red Rock Forest School, Dublin Bay - by Aoife Cannon

“It’s 1989, I’m in my rented room in a flat in Madrid which I share with a Spaniard and a Mexican. I’m homesick, struggling with both the language and living away from home in a foreign city on my own. Letters from home are such a welcome relief and I can’t wait to open this one. I flop on my bed and start reading. The usual news from mom: dad’s working hard though fitting in a bit of golf, the garden is keeping her busy and Ginny is still going for the postman. Then an update about Save Red Rock, a local environmental campaign she’s involved in. I read on...

*We couldn’t believe it, the bulldozer was in the Red Rock fields just beside the woods starting to dig. Stella’s neighbour Sean parked his car in front of the gate blocking the bulldozer from getting out. That finally got the attention of the Council. We’ve hardly stopped since then, it’s been a flurry of meetings with Councillors, writing objections and getting petitions signed.*

*I was up at Red Rock the other day with Ginny, marvelling at the wilderness and feeling like I could be in the west of Ireland yet just a few miles from Dublin city. Aoife, you know how I feel about this place – granny bringing us here on school holidays back in the 1950’s, coming here with you as children – if we lose Red Rock to the developers, it’s gone forever. Our campaign feels relentless at times, yet I’m determined to save it for my grandchildren and their children.*

I’m transported back to this stunning place and feel a mix of homesickness and anger. The realisation that Red Rock – our playground growing up could be gone made me deeply sad. Yet a wave of relief flooded through me knowing mom and others were doing something about it. Red Rock is a special place situated on the north end of Dublin Bay. Author Michael Fewer captures it so well in his book *By Swerve of Shore, Exploring Dublin’s Coast* “*where pillows of smooth, shining metamorphosed limestone, glowing pink in the sun, shelved into the sea*”.

It’s now 2022, and I discover a Forest School has been started in Red Rock. I’m curious and figure this would be an ideal place to do my work placement for college. I’ve taken leave of absence from work to study part time while also caring for mom who has dementia. Elisa, the teacher who started Growing Roots Forest school, and I arrange to meet. We chat and immediately I sense her spirituality and deep connection to children and nature. She welcomes me as a volunteer and within a week I’m immersed in the woods. Encouraged by Elisa, the children show me where the best blackberries are and I’m introduced to Sally, their favourite tree.

One evening as we're finishing up and walking back towards the road, I remark on the furrows in the field showing where the bull dozers had started. Elisa was shocked, she didn't know about the developers' plan to build 44 houses at Red Rock many years earlier. She quizzed me about it – How was it saved? When? Who was in the group? When we reached the road, she turned to me with intent "How can the children thank this group? Without them, we would have no forest."

And so, three weeks later myself and four older people meet Elisa at the entrance to the Red Rock fields and woods. It's a beautiful, sunny, autumnal morning and the children are already in the forest with Briana and Amaia, their leaders. They've invited the Save Red Rock group up to the woods and have a special message for them.

Elisa is laden down with bags, in her hands and on her back. I offer to help and wonder what's in them.

On we go through Red Rock fields and once we reach the woods we hear chatter, laughter and feet crunching on leaves. The children are coming to meet us, fascinated by the visitors but at the same time shy. They turn and show us the way to camp. Some of the contents Elisa was carrying are revealed – camping chairs for the older people and flasks of tea, cordial, and hot chocolate: how thoughtful. Stella, Jacqueline, and Anita (my mum) settle into the chairs. Mick being a bit younger than the women stands behind them, almost in a protective way. The rest of us make ourselves comfortable sitting on the ground or tree stumps in campfire style and the storytelling begins.

Stella starts "*So what happened was one day we saw a great, big bulldozer out in the field*".

"*Oh wow*" said Elisa

"*Yes, we thought gosh, this was not the place to build a row of houses. In those days if it wasn't dangerous, it was grand*" continued Stella "*it was before the planning act had arrived. The developer who had permission from years back had started work. So what we did, we got after all the local Councillors, you know..... rang them, gave them coffee, a lot of attention. At this stage this area was all controlled by Dublin City Corporation, the City didn't understand this kind of thing. We persuaded*

*these Councillors to cancel, remove his planning permission and stop the bull dozers and stop everything.”*

*It was a great battle, Jacqueline adds.*

Although the children sat quietly, some playing with pinecones and needles, others digging in the muck, I wondered was it all going over their heads. But they were hooked. Grace piped up “*that’s a great idea*” when hearing about the car blocking the gate. And Ben gave a thumbs up when hearing that the Council were persuaded to give the lands over to the public. We all listen to how the Save Red Rock group over a period of almost 12 years fought to keep the lands free from development.

Mick tells of the difficulties “it wasn’t plain sailing the developers tried everything...bribing us saying they wouldn’t knock down the trees if they got permission for 6 houses, erecting barbed wire fences preventing a right of way for walkers. That got everybody up in arms, anyone who walked the hill knew you couldn’t do this on legal rights of way. And it led to a huge protest march on the hill, almost 1,000 people, and many others signing affidavits. The developer sued and the day before the court, he took the fence down, went into the court case and said “Your honour, I’ve taken down the fence”. Finally, on 16<sup>th</sup> May the year 2000 Red Rock and other areas in Howth and Sutton were awarded a Special Amenity Area Order from the Minister of the Environment. This order is provided only to areas of exceptional interest from the point of view of natural, built and cultural heritage and provides a high level of protection.

Elisa invited the children to mark this unique occasion by presenting the visitors with homemade cards. Each child was encouraged to explain their special message, one was even written in Ogham. We took photos and settled down to a cup of tea. Sitting back and taking it all in, I was overwhelmed with gratitude for all that had happened to culminate in this day – the Save Red Rock group, Elisa having the courage and creativity to bring the generations together, the children being so captivated by the story and ultimately the woods and nature herself.

I thought back to the letter mom had written, and how I’d never have dreamt that saving Red Rock would have this effect on future generations. That this story could inspire children to make their world a better place.”

In 1999 Fingal County Council recognised the exceptional character of Howth (including Red Rock fields and woods) by making the Howth Special Area Amenity Order covering an area of 547 hectares. The order was confirmed by the Minister of the Environment.



[Back to top](#)

## g. News from the CSO – Update on SDG 5



The CSO, in collaboration with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), has published an updated report on SDG 5: ‘Ireland's UN SDGs - Goal 5 Gender Equality 2024’ available at: [Goal 5 Gender Equality 2024](#)

[Back to top](#)

## h. Climate Action News – February Issue



The first edition of **Climate Action News** for 2025 has been published!

In this edition, published which you can view at [Climate Action News | Spring | LinkedIn](#), you can read about:

- Investment in the clean energy transition,
- The Deposit Return Scheme marks first birthday,
- EPA releases highlights report,



- EV and active travel developments.

For more information, contact: [climatenews@taoiseach.gov.ie](mailto:climatenews@taoiseach.gov.ie)

## i. SDG Advocate Training – Adult and Community Educators



**Development Perspectives** (DP) has launched the 2025 **SDG Advocate Training** application process for Adult and Community Educators.

The 2025 SDG Advocate Training is a 7-month project that offers 23 Adult and Community Educators from across Ireland an opportunity to deepen their understanding of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through Global Citizenship Education and be supported in the design and implementation of informed SDG Action Project within their practice.

The closing date for applications is **10 March 2025**.

Read more / Apply now: [Become a 2025 SDG Advocate!](#) 

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**We hope that you enjoyed reading this issue the Department's ESD Newsletter. If you wish to receive it directly into your inbox every quarter, please [sign up](#) to the circulation list!**