**December Eco News**

We continue to develop our Eco awareness and when it is their turn to be Teacher Helper, each child will have an opportunity to take on the role of ‘Eco Buddy.’ They have already been busy:

* Picking up litter
* Weeding and preparing the planting boxes
* Using our own compost to fertilise the soil
* Planting alliums (they will attract insects)
* Pruning, weeding and removing old lavender from the Sensory bed.
* Harvesting kale and parsley which was given to a local food bank.

We have also begun planting inside the classroom using recycled containters/ cardboard bowls from dinner to make propagators. This seeds will be cared for inside until they are ready to be planted in out garden.

We were busy this week, making ‘eco friendly decorations for the Strathfoyle Community Christmas Tree. We used small slices of logs to decorate/ draw Christmas pictures on. The light switch on will take place on Saturday 3rd December at 7pm. Look out for our special decorations on the tree!

Keep an eye on our new School website for updates about all things ECO and photos of the children in action.

Mrs Craig has had a visit from Julie from Derry City and Strabane District Council and Gareth from Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful. We have some exciting workshops and activities coming up in 2023 to further promote the children and staff’s awareness of how to care for our world.

Finally, we have a new and improved ECO Code that is simple for all children to learn. Please talk to your child about it.

Are you ready to POP?

Protect Our Planet

**Some Ideas for an ‘Eco’/ Waste Free Christmas**

**Gifts**

Buying gifts can be a challenge at the best of times, but don’t panic! Making sure you give planet-friendly presents isn’t as tough as you might think – here are some tips to help you along the way:

* Look out for gifts that come with as little packaging as possible, or at least some you can recycle.
* Quality not quantity! A family Secret Santa means you don't have to buy for everyone.
* Opt for secondhand. If you're doing a Secret Santa, how about a rule that it has to be bought from a charity shop or a second-hand website!
* Why not put together a zero-waste kit? You could include a [portable cup](https://www.surreywildlifetrust.org/cy/shop#!/Reusable-Coffee-Cups/c/35410541/offset=0&sort=normal), a [biodegradable lunchbox](https://www.ywtshop.org.uk/product/kids-biodegradable-leak-proof-lunch-box/), or some wax food wraps.
* Make something yourself. You can choose your own packaging, and the personal effort makes a gift priceless! Cook up some fudge or make your own gin.
* [Tote bags](https://thewildlifetrustsshop.com/product/hedgehog-tote-bag/) are a fun gift and a great way to avoid plastic bags at the checkout.
* [Adopt an animal](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/adopt-animal) as a gift.
* Give an experience - how about [Wildlife Trust membership](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/christmas-gift-membership).
* Buy sustainable products. How about a [Hebridean wool blanket](https://www.ywtshop.org.uk/product/limited-edition-pure-wool-designer-blanket/). Spun in Yorkshire with wool from the local Wildlife Trust’s grazing flock of rare breed Hebridean sheep. Hats and shawls are available too.
* If you are sending Christmas cards you can recycle last year's to make your own. Alternatively, [send a eCard](https://www.dontsendmeacard.com/ecards/charities/the-wildlife-trusts) that raises funds for nature.

**Wrapping it up**

Of course, choosing the gift is just the beginning – think before you wrap it up:

* Shiny wrapping paper is pretty, but it’s not recyclable! The same goes for glittery paper. Use brown paper for a lovely vintage look.
* Sellotape is made of plastic but you can get brown paper tape - or get creative with some ribbon or string. Better yet, go for a reusable option like a box, bag, or cloth.
* Don’t forget your Christmas cards – the same rules go for glittery and shiny cards. Watch out for the plastic wrappers too. Try to find ones sold loose or packaged differently - or have a go at making your own! Or, you could send a [Wildlife Trust e-card!](https://www.dontsendmeacard.com/ecards/charities/the-wildlife-trusts-2)
* Save any Christmas cards and cut them up to use as tags for next year.

**Food**

We waste a lot of food throughout the year but figures reach a high over Christmas!

* Don't buy too much. Plan meals so you know how much food you'll need.
* Shop local to avoid food miles. Often local markets are a great way of avoiding plastic-wrapped fruit and veg too.
* Get a local veg box delivery. Often they are from local farms, plastic-free and are full of wonky-looking veg. All wins for the planet!
* [Compost vegetable waste](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-compost-your-waste).
* Eat your leftovers. Some of the tastiest meals are made from yesterday's food.
* Cut down on meat and dairy. Meat has a big carbon footprint so try out some vegetarian or vegan alternatives.
* Organic means that fewer chemicals are used and is a big help for wildlife. Make one or two switches to organic produce in your next shop. Even small changes make a big difference.

**Decoration**

Chances are you have a magical cupboard at home full of sparkly Christmas decorations that come out every year. If so, great! Make the most of what you have and don’t throw them out unless you have to! BUT, if you want to add something new, make sure you think first!

* Avoid tinsel. Those little bits that end up sprinkled all over the house are plastic. Instead have a go at making your own decorations. How about some bunting, dried fruit, origami, pinecones or popcorn tinsel!
* Reuse your Christmas tree 🎄
	+ Buy a pre-loved fake one instead of a new one. Check out [Freecycle](https://www.freecycle.org/), [eBay](https://www.ebay.co.uk/sch/i.html?_from=R40&_trksid=p2380057.m570.l1313.TR12.TRC2.A0.H0.XChristmas+tree.TRS0&_nkw=Christmas+tree&_sacat=0) or [Gumtree](https://www.gumtree.com/).
	+ Rent a tree. These trees are grown in special pots that can be dug up and replanted year after year. Check it is grown sustainably first.
	+ Look after a real tree. Growing trees is always great but transporting and disposing of them isn't good for the environment. So look after your tree and reuse it year on year.
	+ If you do get a real tree [here are some tips on how to recycle it at the end of the month.](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/blog/re-purposing-your-real-christmas-tree)
* Get creative for nature. You could [make your very own wreath that’ll feed the birds](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-make-christmas-wreath-birds) as well as looking great!
* Turn off your Christmas lights overnight and when you are out the house to save energy.
* Turn down your heating a notch or two and save money as well as the planet
* Avoid buying Christmas crackers which often contain plastic toys. Make your own using toilet roll tubes instead. Writing your own jokes is the best bit!
* Make your own natural table decorations - holly leaves and dried fruit look fantastic.
* Avoid synthetic candles which can give off chemicals. There are plenty of vegan, natural alternatives.