



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET SUB COMMITTEE

7TH MARCH 2024

RCT SCHOOLS ECO AWARD 2023-2024

AUTHOR: Andrea Richards, Service Director, 21st Century Schools and Transformation

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members with an overview of progress in the launch and delivery of the RCT Schools Eco Award (Bronze Award), where participating schools are positively contributing to the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet Sub Committee:

- 2.1 Considers the information contained within the report.
- 2.2 Note any considerations that could be implemented in the Silver Award which will be launched at the beginning of the next academic year (2024/2025).

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To assist the Council in meeting its 2030 Carbon Neutral targets.

For RCT to be a carbon neutral Council, for the whole County Brough to be as close as possible to carbon neutral and to contribute to the Welsh Government's ambition of a Net Zero public sector.

- 3.2 To support the delivery of the Council's wider Tackling Climate Change Strategy.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 As part of the Education Service's contribution to reducing carbon/energy use across its school portfolio, an eco-award was developed for all schools in RCT. The award's

purpose was to increase engagement in climate and ecology issues within our schools, in line with our delivery plan.

4.2 The RCT Schools' Eco Award focuses on three key themes:

- Biodiversity and Nature,
- Waste and Recycling, and
- Energy and Carbon Saving.

4.3 All aspects of the award criteria must be met to achieve the RCT Schools Eco Award, bronze level. Examples of some things included in the award criteria are.

- Class projects on biodiversity and eco-systems, the impact of waste and recycling on the environment, and the contributors of increased carbon levels and their impact on the climate.
- Appointing School Biodiversity Champions and Junior Pollinators.
- Participation in the Council's Christmas Card and Easter Egg Box recycling competitions.
- Setting a target for a reduction in school waste and achieving it.
- Reduce the school's electric consumption by 5% and reduce the school's gas consumption by 5%.
- Introduce at least 1 initiative to mitigate the carbon output of the school.

4.4 The bronze level of the award was launched on the 6th of October 2023 at Ysgol Bro Taf, with Councillor Lewis (Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language) and Councillor Leyshon (Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services) in attendance. Current pupils of Ysgol Bro Taf and Cilfynydd Primary School discussed their concerns regarding climate change and biodiversity with those present and explained projects already underway at the schools to enhance biodiversity at their school sites and contribute positively towards climate change. The pupils and school staff also discussed how the themes of biodiversity and climate change feed into the school curriculum. Morgan Sindall Construction contributed to the launch as they are currently working at Ysgol Bro Taf. They provided the school with six bird boxes and are providing support towards rewards for any school that completes the bronze award by September 2024.

4.5 Following the launch, award information and criteria were sent to all schools in RCT, including a sign-up form to indicate their participation in the award scheme.

4.6 In November 2023, an energy dashboard was launched as part of the RCT Schools' Eco Award. This was made available to all schools in RCT to assist schools in monitoring their energy use. Head teacher and pupil energy dashboards have been made available so that different levels of information can be accessed, as required.

5. CURRENT POSITION

5.1 Since the launch in October 2023, a total of 21 schools completed the sign-up form to indicate participation in the bronze award during the 2023/2024 academic year.

- 5.2 As part of the bronze award criteria, participating schools must participate in the Council's Christmas card recycling competition, which is run by the Council's Waste Services Department. Due to the deadline involved in this element of the criteria, the sign-up period for the RCT Schools' Eco Award closed once the Christmas card competition was over. This was done to prevent any school from signing-up to our award scheme having already missed the chance to complete a mandatory part of the award criteria.
- 5.3 E-mails are sent out to participating schools throughout the academic year to encourage their continued efforts towards achieving the bronze award. These e-mails also include some useful tips and ideas for schools that could help them in meeting the award criteria. Two of these emails have been sent out to schools since the launch in October – the next one will be sent before the Easter holidays.
- 5.4 Schools participating in the RCT Schools' Eco Award in the 2023/2024 academic year have until September 2024 to complete all aspects of the award criteria. In September, participating schools will be asked to complete a form, identifying which aspects of the award criteria they have met.
- 5.5 Any school that successfully completes all of the bronze award criteria by September 2024 will receive a reward. These rewards will be items that are suitable for the school site and will help them in their efforts towards achieving the silver award. This could be bird boxes, bug hotels, hedgehog houses, raised beds etc.
- 5.6 In the Spring of 2024, work will begin on developing the criteria of the silver award, which will then launch in Autumn 2024. Schools that have completed the bronze level can then move on to the silver award in the 2024/2025 academic year.
- 5.7 Schools that did not participate in the bronze award in the current academic year will be encouraged to do so in the 2024/2025 academic year, thereby encouraging more schools to actively participate and contribute to the Council's Tackling Climate Change Strategy.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

There are no equality and diversity or socio-economic duty implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

7. CONSULTATION/ENGAGEMENT/INVOLVEMENT

There are no consultation implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

There are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations set out in the report. The rewards for schools successfully achieving the bronze award will be met from existing budgets and a contractor contribution.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

10. LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 10.1 The Council has committed to being a carbon neutral organisation by 2030 and is working to have the entire County Borough as close as possible to being carbon neutral by 2030 – this includes our schools. The Eco Schools' Award supports the priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan 'Making a Difference' – 2020-24. Specifically, it contributes to 'Places' by supporting schools to reduce waste and increase recycling, reducing carbon and encouraging biodiversity.
- 10.2 The Schools' Eco Award also supports the seven well-being goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – particularly 'A Prosperous Wales', 'A Resilient Wales' and 'A Globally Responsible Wales', as well as supporting the Sustainable Development principle of the Well-being of Future Generations Act by encouraging the improvement of well-being through the RCT Schools Eco Award, making sure that decisions we take today do not affect future generations from making the decisions they need in the future. It also reflects the five ways of working in the Well-being of Future Generations Act with the award seeking to instil positive behaviours for the long-term by collaboration and integration and being focused on getting schools involved in preventative and precautionary action by taking positive actions to reduce carbon, increase recycling and improve biodiversity.

11. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

Participation in the Eco Schools Award is available to all schools across all electoral wards.

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 The RCT Schools' Eco Award is getting our schools involved in improving the carbon/energy use of the County Borough. The Council aims to be carbon neutral by 2030 and has a target for the entire County Borough to be as close to carbon neutral as possible. The RCT Schools' Eco Award will contribute to these targets, by encouraging our school sites to reduce their energy use, improve biodiversity and emphasise the importance of accurate recycling.
- 12.2 This report provides an update of the current status of the RCT Schools' Eco Award. Schools successfully achieving the bronze award will be known in September 2024

once all participating schools have completed and submitted the criteria form. As mentioned previously, any school that successfully completes the bronze award by September 2024 will receive a reward. In the meantime, work will also begin on developing the silver award, with the aim of launching it in the Autumn of 2024.

- 12.3 Schools that did not participate in the bronze award in the current academic year will be encouraged to do so in the 2024/2025 academic year.