

North East schools and environmental groups gather to become more sustainable

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International School Aberdeen (ISA) hosted this year's United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Conference on Thursday 30th May.

ISA opened its doors to children from twelve schools from across Aberdeen City and Shire and provided an opportunity to build relationships and learn how to address and work towards reaching the United Nations (UN) sustainability development goals locally and globally.

In its third year, the collaborative event brought together eco minded students as well as environmental organisations from the North East to share ideas and showcase how they are working towards supporting the 2030 agenda for the UN's on-going ocean science for sustainable development plans.

Held in the impressive ISA Queen Elizabeth Theatre, pupils heard from the keynote speaker, Professor Colin Moffat, Senior Scientific Advisor to the Scottish Government for Marine who talked around keeping a clean, healthy and resilient ocean. Professor Moffat kicked off the event and commented: "Children are the leaders and scientists of our future; therefore, it is important to reinforce global sustainability challenges including climate change, biodiversity and contaminants which affect all our lives. Events like this bring communities together and hopefully we see some rising ambassadors who can make a difference to support sustainability in our seas and oceans as we push hard to improve our eco-systems".

The conference attracted pupils from schools including Banchory Academy, Bridge of Don Academy, Bucksburn Academy, Kemnay Academy, Fernielea Primary, Kittybrewster Primary, Muirfield Primary, St Joseph's Primary, St Margaret's School for Girls and the Robert Gordon's College and The Gordon Schools. Throughout the day, each school presented their goals and highlighted how they planned to tackle sustainable issues.

Primary 6 pupils from Fernielea Primary School also performed two songs at the conference after taking part in an innovative project, developed in partnership by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and Scotland's culture and sustainability charity Creative Carbon Scotland, to explore how creative approaches can help raise levels of flood awareness.

ISA's eco club led the event's workshops and various representatives from North East environmental and sustainability groups were on hand to discuss how the pupils can be more environmentally conscious at home and in the classroom. In the ISA Street, lots of engagement was seen through a variety of displays, along with projects being showcased from the Miniature Earth

Learning Project as well as Aberdeen Climate Action, Aberdeen for A Fairer World Fairtrade, Grampian Regional Equality Council, Marigold & Mo, One Seed Forward, Quids In Theatre Company, Recycle for Aberdeen, Repair Café, CFINE, Sustain Energy and Vegan Outreach Scotland.

Closing the event, ISA Head of School, Nicholas Little said, "It was brilliant to see pupils from across the North East enthusiastically sharing their ideas on Sustainable Development goals and learning from each other on issues that affects us all. The UN has opened our eyes to see the problems that our oceans and its inhabitants tackle every day and it is encouraging to see children who are keen to become more sustainable. I have no doubt that if our communities become more environmentally sustainable at a local level it would have a positive impact on our climate internationally".

Dr David Pirie, SEPA Executive Director, said: "The scale of environmental challenges facing humanity is enormous and there is a real urgency to act. Every day SEPA works to help Scotland prepare more powerfully for future increased flooding in the face of clear science on climate change. Getting the next generation involved in understanding how flooding happens is a vital part of how we do that, helping local communities become more resilient. We hope that the children will continue to spread the word to their friends and families on how they can be flood-prepared in a changing climate."

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