

The COBIS Eco Film Awards 2021

1. Introduction

Once again, it has been both a personal and professional pleasure for those of us involved in viewing, comparing and judging the 38 videos that were submitted for the 2021 COBIS Eco Film Awards. The standard was good, and we were especially impressed with the submissions given that schools and students were having to deal with the impact of the covid-19 pandemic. It was good to see how many entries took care to ensure that what students were saying was audible despite the wearing of face masks. Other schools had to overcome project plans disrupted by the virus. As last year, final decisions were hard to make.

There were entries from 15 countries and have identified schools in Asia, the Middle East and Europe as the 2021 winners and runners up. What characterised these entries was a coherent story clearly told about an innovative creative student project that made a change to the operation of the school, and which was well told in an engaging way with students to the fore. These stories were also authentic in that they were obviously about the students telling their story in appropriate ways for their setting and age. In these videos music and images were carefully chosen to add to the story, and data were used with precision to illustrate issues and outcomes.

Again, it was good to have insights into how schools from across the world are dealing in positive ways with environmental issues, and to listen to the passionate and knowledgeable young people in the videos. This year, the credits shown at the end of the films better celebrated the roles of those behind the camera. We appreciated the creativity and innovation shown by many of the projects, along with the range of approaches taken to film-making. There were splendid examples of smart video-graphic techniques and the very effective use of music. As ever, understated wit was an effective communications tool. Recycling was again a popular theme, with the contemporary problem of our use of plastics particularly prominent. The more successful accounts, however, went beyond the mechanics of collecting, disposing and re-using materials to have a long-term impact on both sustainability and on learning.

As last year, we saw the effective use of statistics to illustrate issues and contextualise outcomes, and there was evidence of multi-age working and whole-school involvement, and links between the school and the wider community in what was being attempted. The most prominent negative feature found within this year's videos was that too many played insufficient attention to project outcomes; a second problem we found was that it was sometimes difficult to differentiate between what the school itself had done and what students themselves had led. And a third was that some videos were just too short to fully develop the story they were trying to tell.

2. Results

Our brief was to select a winner and two runners-up in each category. The overall results are:

Key Stages 1 & 2	Key Stages 3 to 5
Winners	
GEMS Wellington International School, UAE <i>No Single Use Plastic in my Lunchbox</i>	Panyathip International School, Laos <i>The Evergreen Garden</i>
Runners-up	
The British School in The Netherlands <i>Green Waste at JSV</i>	Avenor College, Romania <i>Making Avenor Green</i>
Aloha College Marbella, Spain <i>ACM Water Saving Warriors</i>	The English International College, Spain <i>Plastic Pollution</i>

3. Commentary

3.1 The Key Stages 1 & 2 Projects

GEMS Wellington International School, UAE: ‘No Single-use Plastic in my Lunch Box’

This was a well put-together video addressing the issue of single-use plastics. We particularly liked how the film gave thought to the existing generation and those yet to come. The video was well suited to the students’ ages (Year 2) and the issue was something that these young children could get behind and feel they were able to make a difference. The communication was clear and simple, with good use of backdrops to share the message. The music and images were emotive from the beginning and so grabbed the viewer’s attention immediately.

Aloha College Marbella, Spain: ‘Water Saving Warriors’

These Year 1 pupils showed fantastic enthusiasm as Water Saving Warriors; they seemed to be having fun as well as working on a significant issue. It was a well-made video that explained the issue clearly with a good mix of facts and information throughout. The pupils showed a variety of ways to be “*more conscious about the water we use*”. This included a student-designed hydroponics system – a brilliant and novel idea for growing at school. Again, this showed what the youngest children can do to address environmental issues and make a difference.

The British School in The Netherlands: ‘Green Waste at JSV’

This was an informative video about an inclusive project; it was great to involve every class and see how the children actively participated in the solution with green waste at the school. It was also very good to see the steps in the simple cycle of using food waste to make compost, to make food for plants which we can then eat. The focus on what to do about waste and being able to make a “*small difference*” where you can, was very appropriate. And the final “*no time to waste*” message was a nice touch.

3.2 The Key Stages 3 to 5 Projects

Panyathip International School, Laos: ‘The Evergreen Garden’

This was a witty, inventive and well put together video which told the story of the students’ journey towards creating a green open space incorporating a school garden. It focused on important environmental issues, including the educational benefits of active first-hand outdoor learning, and promoted the imperative of having positive human relationships with the rest of the natural world. Many students were involved in this sustainability-focused action and they worked together well at promoting sustainability ideals and human well-being.

Avenor College, Romania: ‘Making Avenor Green’

This clear video began with the effective use of statistics to document the areas of Romanian society where sustainability needs to be improved. This context provided a vivid backdrop to the improvements they planned in their own school and in the city of Bucharest. They had a sound rationale for the development of their ideas to lead to sustainable solutions. A significant number of students were involved, working with people from beyond the school including NGOs and students’ families. It was good to see clear outcomes with more to come.

The English International College, Spain: ‘Plastic Pollution’

This well-crafted video began by telling the story of student participation in a community project leading to positive change that benefitted local people and the natural environment. They worked with an NGO and local community groups, and many students were involved. The video went on to illustrate how, following a campaign by the eco-group, the school addressed one of the environmental issues that the community project focused on: single-use plastics. This illustrated effective sustainability action within the school, and positive outcomes.

4. Final Thoughts

On behalf of the UK National Association for Environmental Education we should like to commend all the schools that took part in this competition despite the problems caused by the pandemic, and congratulate your students on producing such high-quality videos. We hope that you all benefited from participating, and that this competition has reinforced your determination to address, through both your teaching and the ways in which your schools operate, the environmental and sustainability issues we all face.

With good wishes,

Tom Davies, Juliette Green, Elsa Lee, Emily Munn, William Scott

The National Association for Environmental Education

April 2021