

**Script and Reference list ECEY6005**

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**No AI used**

**part 1 and 2 – 18mins 49 seconds (word count 2453)**

**Part 1 my Reflection on my Bee Haven Sustainability Project.**

*“Planting with Purpose – Growing a Pollinator Haven” for the John Muir award.*

My decision to create a bee haven has come after needing to pick up Honey that I buy from a local family business in Glynneath known as Tubbys honey. As I’ve mentioned in part 1 Max Boyce along with our community hold a special place in our hearts in memory of a special man, our local beekeeper who initially started making this honey who passed away to MND at very young age. His son has taken over the business in honour of his late dad.

As part of my practical sustainability experience for the John Muir Award, I decided to create my very own bee haven in the grounds of the school. I wanted to create an environment that provides a safe and nurturing space for bees and other pollinators to thrive. Thus, supporting learning around biodiversity, conservation, and ethical citizenship.

With the bee haven being created on the grounds of the school the children were involved. This project including the children was a deeply grounding and hopeful experience for me as a practitioner. What began as a simple sustainability activity quickly became something much more, a shared journey of curiosity, wonder, and connection with nature, with the children, and with a sense of purpose.

I saw how quickly children formed emotional bonds with “their” flowers and with the idea of helping bees. Their questions “Do bees get thirsty?” “What happens if the flowers all go away?” reminded me just how capable young learners are of engaging with complex environmental themes when given the trust and space to do so.

What surprised me was how this experience also impacted me. Slowing down to plant, observe, and respond alongside the children helped me reconnect with why I entered this profession in the first place: to nurture thoughtful, compassionate individuals who care deeply about the world around them. The practical elements gave me a real sense of momentum, and the children's engagement reignited my belief that education for sustainability is not an add-on it is a living, breathing pedagogy.

It also challenged me to consider my own responsibilities. Was I modelling sustainable thinking in my choices? Was I embedding enough of this in everyday practice? The project has definitely shifted my perspective: from teaching *about* nature to teaching *with* and *through* it.

This project offered a powerful opportunity to witness how young children engage with environmental learning in joyful, meaningful ways. The activity combined exploration, storytelling, inquiry, and practical care for living things. From counting seeds and decorating bottle planters to observing pollinators at work, the children became co-creators of a living space—developing empathy, curiosity, and a connection to nature.

The hands-on nature of the task supported their sense of agency. I observed children checking “their plants” daily, adjusting watering routines, and asking questions about bee behaviour demonstrating ecological identity. One child said, “The bees like my flower best!”—a simple yet powerful reflection of ownership and pride.

The experience also deepened my understanding of Cynefin children locating themselves in community, culture, and environment. For many, this was their first opportunity to grow something from seed or to learn about the lives of bees. We explored seasons, care for small creatures, and the importance of pollination. These conversations were not just biological they were relational.

Importantly, the project aligned with the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*, encouraging long-term thinking and responsible citizenship.

It was an opportunity to give the Children's a Voice also, I heard several children show interest, curiosity, give opinions, show care for living creatures. Examples such as

- "This is for the bees to sleep in!"
- "We need more colours to make them come!"
- "Mine is growing! It is the tallest."
- "Look its Mummy, Daddy, and twin snail family".

I could make Observations from their observations.

- Sustained engagement over time.
- Use of mathematical language (measuring, comparing).
- Recalled pollinator facts in other activities.
- Developed turn-taking, collaboration, and inquiry skills.

Reflecting on the bee haven project through the lens of Froebel, Montessori, Malaguzzi, and Sterling has deepened my understanding of how sustainability is not simply a topic to be taught, but a way of being, learning, and relating. These theorists collectively affirm that young children can engage with complex ideas such as care for the environment, interdependence, and ethical action when learning is rooted in nature, agency, and meaningful experience. The project brought these principles to life: children were not passive recipients of knowledge but active participants in shaping a shared space of care and curiosity. This alignment between theory and practice reinforces the value of embedding sustainability into early years pedagogy not as an add-on, but as a foundation for lifelong learning and responsible citizenship.

Creating the bee haven had a profoundly positive impact on my own well-being. Immersing myself in nature alongside the children offered a sense of calm, purpose, and connection that I had not fully anticipated. The act of planting, observing, and nurturing living things became a restorative process one that grounded me in the present moment and reminded me of the joy found in simple, mindful activity. Professionally, it reignited my passion for experiential learning and reaffirmed my belief in the power of sustainability education. Seeing the children's curiosity and

care unfold gave me a renewed sense of hope and motivation, especially in a time when environmental concerns can often feel overwhelming. Personally, the project helped me slow down and reconnect with my own values reminding me that meaningful change often begins with small, intentional acts. It was a reminder that sustainability is not just something I teach, but something I live and that in nurturing the environment, I was also nurturing myself. It also got me thinking about future plans and what can I do next, already I was thinking about my next project maybe a reuse and repair stations setting up a “fix-it” or “reuse” corner where children can repurpose old materials or maybe using socks and turning them into puppets, cardboard into habitats, or broken toys into art. This supports circular economy thinking and creativity.

## Part 2

According to Tinney (2013) experiences such as creating a pollinator haven and engaging young children in nature-based learning as explored in Part 1 offer rich opportunities to support the themes and aspirations of ESD) in early years education. These experiences align with the principles of practical learning, learning from nature, and futures thinking, which are central to both global ESD frameworks and Welsh policy (Welsh Government, 2022b).

According to John Muir Trust (2025) the John Muir Award provides a powerful framework for embedding ESD in early years through practical, nature-based, and future-focused learning. These experiences are not only developmentally appropriate but also deeply aligned with the rights-based, ecological, and participation values of early childhood education. By drawing on the legacies of Froebel, Malaguzzi, and Montessori, educators can cultivate a generation of children who are not only aware of sustainability but actively living it (Sakr and Kaur, 2024) (Lino and Parente, 2018). Practical, hands-on activities such as part 1 embody the core of ESD by enabling children to learn *through doing* Sakr & Kaur (2024) This aligns with Froebel’s belief cited by Addison (2021) that children learn best through real-life experiences and purposeful activity.

Addison (2021) suggests Froebel viewed nature as a vital context for learning, where children could develop agency, creativity, and a sense of responsibility. Research supports this as Jarrett (2016) argues that practical sustainability experiences in early childhood foster ecological identity and empower children to function as capable contributors to their communities. These activities also reflect the Curriculum for Wales's emphasis on "authentic contexts for learning" and the development of ethical, informed citizens (Welsh Government, 2022).

The John Muir Award's focus on discovering, exploring, and conserving wild places resonates with Reggio Emilia philosophy cited by O'Sullivan (2025), which positions the environment as the "third teacher" By engaging with bees, flowers, and natural cycles, children develop ecological literacy an understanding of interdependence and biodiversity (The Wildlife Trusts , n.d).

Barrable (2019) highlights that early, meaningful contact with nature supports pro-environmental attitudes and wellbeing. These experiences also reflect the Cynefin principle in the Curriculum for Non-Maintained Settings, fostering a sense of place and belonging through local, nature-based learning (Welsh Government, 2022b).

The Curriculum for Non-Maintained Settings emphasizes the importance of "enabling adults" who create engaging experiences and effective environments that support holistic development, particularly in the early years. Adults model sustainable behaviours, facilitate inquiry-based and outdoor learning, and nurture a sense of belonging and responsibility toward the natural world (Welsh Government, 2022b).

O'Sullivan (2025) believes futures thinking in ESD encourages children to imagine and shape a more sustainable world. Activities like creating pollinator gardens and learning about bee conservation help children understand cause and consequence, and their role in shaping the future. This aligns with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which calls for long-term thinking and environmental responsibility.

Lino & Parente (2018) suggests that the Montessori's emphasis on independence, responsibility, and respect for life also supports this theme. She believed that children, when given freedom within a prepared environment, develop the capacity to care for others and the planet.

Across early childhood theory and sustainability literature, a shared philosophy emerges children learn best through active, meaningful engagement with the natural world. According to Sakr and Kaur (2024) Lino and Parente (2018).

and Sterling (2024) through theorists like Froebel, Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and Sterling even though they all wrote or worked in different contexts, they connect and agree in their views on nature, agency, and the purpose of education.

Froebel viewed nature cited by Addison (2021) and Sakr & Kaur (2024).

as a moral and pedagogical necessity, believing that children learn through unity and connection with living things. They advocated for gardening, hands-on learning, and real-world experiences, key principles echoed in sustainable pedagogies today.

This aligns with Montessori's (1949) cited by Lino & Parente (2018) emphasis on respect for life and self-directed learning, where children develop moral reasoning by engaging responsibly with their environments.

Similarly, Reggio Emilia approach encourages children to explore sustainability through creativity, inquiry, and deep relationships with place and community. His concept of the environment as the "third teacher" invites us to see nature not just as a setting, but as an *active participant* in learning O'Sullivan (2025).

These ideas overlap with Sterling's call for a paradigm shift in education from transmissive, fact-based teaching to *transformative learning* that builds personal meaning, critical thinking, and action for sustainable futures (Sterling, 2024) and (Siraj-Blatchford *et.al*, 2018).

All four theorists advocate for agency, connection to nature, and holistic learning cornerstones of ESD (UNESCO, 2020). Their collective voices suggest that sustainability should not be an add-on but deeply embedded in how, where, and why we educate.

Maslow cited by Embrace Relief (2019) argues that people must first meet their basic needs for food, water, shelter, and safety before they can focus on higher-level goals. This aligns with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) like *Zero Hunger*, *Clean Water and Sanitation*, and *Good Health and Well-being* Without these foundations, individuals and communities cannot meaningfully engage in sustainability efforts (United Nations n.d.) and (Water Aid, 2025).

Moreover, Recent research by Tinney (2023a) highlights the need for greater support, training, and funding to ensure the consistent implementation of outdoor learning across early years settings in Wales. This aligns closely with my experience of the bee haven project, where outdoor, nature-based learning became a powerful vehicle for engaging children in sustainability. The project reflected the call for a broader understanding of outdoor learning moving beyond traditional activities to include creative, ecocentric experiences that foster curiosity, care, and agency. Tinney (2023b) further argues for a shift away from anthropocentric perspectives in early childhood education, advocating for a more nature-centred approach that values children's interactions with the non-human world. This was evident as children developed emotional connections with pollinators and plants, asked thoughtful questions, and took responsibility for nurturing their environment echoing Froebel's emphasis on unity with nature (Sakr and Kaur, 2024) and Malaguzzi's view of the environment as a co-teacher Lino and Parente (2018) Moreover, Tinney (2018) stresses that ESD and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) must be more intentionally embedded in the Welsh curriculum, with practitioners playing a key role in modelling sustainable behaviours. Through the bee haven, I was able to embody this role guiding children through experiential, cross-curricular learning that supported both ecological literacy and ethical citizenship, in line with the Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government, 2022) and the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Welsh Government, 2015).

In addition, Tinney, G. (2020) and Osullivan (2025) highlights the critical role of early years education in supporting children's understanding of sustainability through holistic, interdisciplinary approaches. This was evident in the bee haven project, where children explored the relationship between pollinators, plants, and people through hands-on, play-based learning. According to Ernst and Burcak (2019) their active involvement asking questions, making planting choices, and caring for the space reflected the importance of listening to children's voices in shaping a more sustainable future (Addison, 2021). The project also demonstrated how ESD Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) can be supported through cross-

curricular, experiential learning, with practitioners modelling sustainable behaviours and guiding reflection (O’Sullivan, 2025).

This aligns with the Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government, 2022), which promotes ethical, informed citizenship, and with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which emphasises long-term thinking and environmental responsibility. Donaldson’s vision for the new curriculum is built around four core purposes, one of which is to develop learners as:

“Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world, who show their commitment to the sustainability of the planet” (Donaldson, 2015, p. 29).

The bee haven experience shows how early years settings can embed sustainability meaningfully, nurturing children’s sense of agency, place, and care for the natural world (UNEP, 2022).

Furthermore, the bee haven project closely aligns with UNESCO’s sustainability goals, particularly through its focus on ESD. By involving children in planting, observing pollinators, and caring for nature, the project supported SDG 4.7—promoting sustainable thinking and global citizenship from an early age (UNESCO, 2020).

Lastly, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UNICEF, 2022) strongly supports sustainability education, especially through its emphasis on children’s rights to education, participation, and a healthy environment. Part 1 supported Article 29 by fostering environmental respect through hands-on learning. Honoured Article 12 by listening to children’s ideas and encouraging their agency. And contributed to a rights-based approach to sustainability, where children are not just learners but active participants in shaping a better world.

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