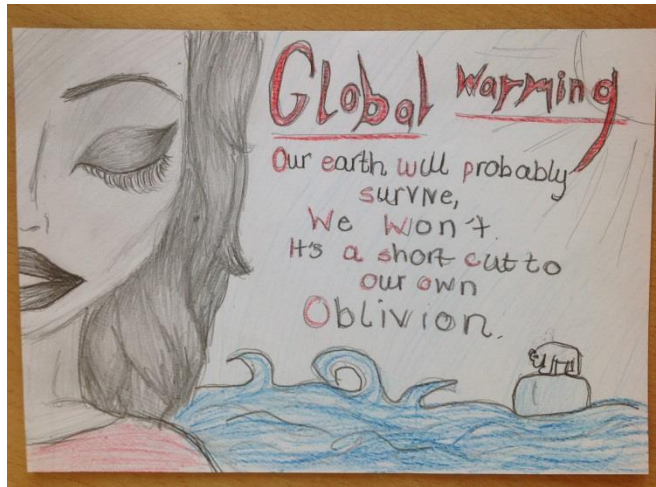
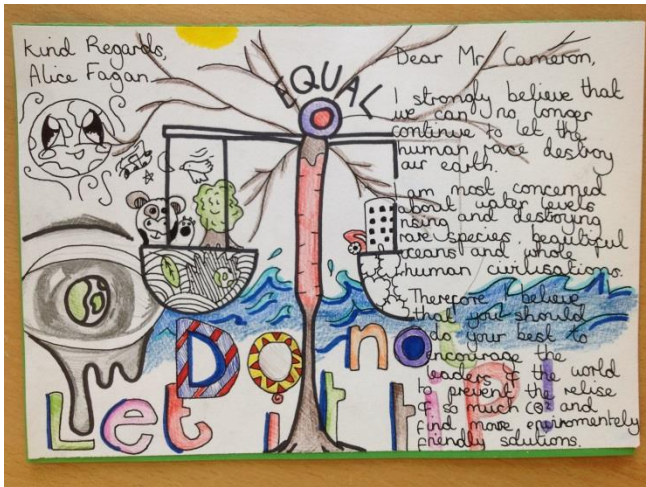


POSTCARD TO PARIS

When World leaders met at the Paris COP21 UN Climate negotiations in December 2015, it was an opportunity to invite 'Sussed in the Forest' schools to run a **Postcard to Paris** campaign in their schools. Following a short presentation, children were asked to write an A5 postcard to world leaders voicing their thoughts, hopes, and fears. The response from schools was astonishing: some ran the campaign with individual year groups, some used it in Daily Worship and smaller schools ran the campaign with everyone. An astonishing 1300 colourful and meaningful cards were submitted - some in French, and all bearing messages to world leaders that represented the voices of the children of the New Forest.



Above: two of the 1300 cards!

Below: sorting and reading a few of the cards



Every card was read, sorted and finally scanned to produce an electronic record. Converting cards to jpegs was to bring its own rewards when they finally reached Paris.

We made Postcard to Paris into a competition with some reluctance. Many postcards were astonishing and opinions regarding a 'good' card will always be subjective. Nevertheless, children like competitions and the generous offer from Anthony Woolhouse of Solar Century prizes was too good an opportunity to miss and we were persuaded to run a competition. Thus the best submissions in each age group from Pre-School to Key Stage 4, as judged by Anthony Woolhouse, of West Solent Solar Cooperative, and by

local artist Bob Parks, were awarded prizes of a solar lamp. The lamps, purchased from Solar Century, were donated by Anthony, and for each purchased lamp, Solar Century generously donate a further three to African children, who will then be able to do their homework in good, safe, clean and kerosene-free light.



Left: the prize-giving ceremony at West Solent Solar farm

Below: Solar – the inspiration for many postcards



Below: Oswaldo and Mark Hancock meet a young friend from Walhampton School at West Solent Solar



The cards started their journey from the New Forest on November 23rd with Mark Hancock, a Southampton-based scientist who cycled to Paris to raise money for the charity Practical Action. Mark was invited to the presentation of prizes by Michael White, Lymington town mayor and New Forest District Councillor, at West Solent Solar Farm. Mark picked up the cards, met the young artists (see right) and cycled off to France that night. He carried electronic images of all cards on a memory stick.

In Paris, Mark met environmental scientists from 'Pole to Paris' who had cycled, walked and initially sledged from the North and the South Pole to Paris. Mark liaised with Dan Price who had and cycled from New Zealand who handed the cards to the New Zealand prime minister. Thus children's cards, representing the voices of the children of the New Forest, were taken into the Paris conference and the electronic images were projected daily.

Mark set up an adult blog, and a children's blog at <http://oswaldobikestoparis.blogspot.co.uk/> in which Oswaldo, a soft toy owl gave a progress report together with daily key environmental messages. He shared some of the children's postcards too and the blog met with an enthusiastic response, not only from the children in the New Forest, but from others too. Mark said, on reading the cards, "They are beautiful, amazing and moving. How aware these children are. I will be so proud to be the postman."

The blog superseded all expectations as Oswaldo captured the mood of the New Forest, and possibly that of the nation. We were treated to details of Oswaldo's carbon free journey, of his thoughts about renewables; his diet, and a comparison with Mark's vole-free diet.



Right: Oswaldo, in a Paris bar, contemplates whether he can save the planet

We loved hearing that on reaching Paris, Oswaldo became a minor celebrity, even giving a TV interview at one stage. By now, 2000 people had followed Oswaldo's blog. What a sensation he was!



Left : Oswaldo becomes a celebrity in Paris. Here he gives a TV interview

Friends of the Earth generously funded two professionally made banners for the London Climate March of 29th November. They showed collages of the most insightful Postcards to Paris from the children of the New Forest. Each school that took part was represented and, in London, the banners were a much photographed source of huge public interest. Postcards from the schools in Pennington; Priestlands, from Pennington Juniors and from Old Lady St Joseph Schools, were also displayed in St Marks Church during the two weeks of the Paris talks.



Left: Postcards to Paris during the London climate change march.

Unexpectedly, the banners gave extra value. Firstly interested members of local groups such as Friends of the Earth were given the opportunity to explore them. Then each school was allowed to borrow the banners for a day or two: thus began their journey round the New Forest. At the time of writing (February half term) that journey is still incomplete with three schools waiting their turn. Schools very much enjoyed displaying the banners and showing them to children in assemblies or classes.



Left: banners with Applemore College's super Eco Group. right: banners reach New Forest School during their Christmas party! Here, children display them to the entire school.

Banners were 'borrowed' from the school circuit and used to illustrate a talk, 'What next after Paris?' given by Gill Hickman to Lymington United Nations Association, and they will be taken to the Roots and Shoots Awards to which three schools have been invited. We know that Dr Jane Goodall attended COP21 Paris and think she will be interested to see the extent to which children are concerned about climate change. The final resting place of our banners will be Minstead Study Centre where we hope they will continue to inspire their many young visitors.

Below: banners reach New Forest Primary School during their Christmas party! Here, children display them to the entire school.



This has been the story of extraordinary generosity on the part of both individuals and organisations, such is the strength of feeling about climate change.

What of the lasting impact of the campaign? We know that for many children, especially in primary schools, this was their first introduction to climate change and it proved scary for some. So many teachers remarked how engaged their children felt with the Paris talks. One said, "Some felt that it was they who had ensured the success of the talks!" Now we need to maintain the momentum of those successful talks and make sure that world leaders deliver what they have promised.