

Most Impactful ESG



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Campaign

WEEE Ireland Schools Battery Recycling Competition – Senior Schools Focus (2024/2025)

Overview

This award highlights initiatives that drive social good, corporate responsibility, and/or sustainability.



Public Relations Consultant

MediaConsult



Client

WEEE Ireland

What was the brief/objective e.g the problem to be solved or opportunity to be grasped?

For over 13 years, WEEE Ireland's Schools Battery Recycling Programme has empowered students to become sustainability champions. But in 2023/2024, a 52% drop in battery collections in secondary schools and a 13% decline in participation signalled a crisis - and an opportunity.

Working with MediaConsult, WEEE Ireland set out to reignite interest among senior students with a targeted national campaign.

The goal: make battery recycling relevant again leveraging curriculum links, student-led storytelling, and digital-first outreach. By reconnecting with students on their terms, the campaign aimed to restore momentum and position battery recycling as an action that's empowering, creative, and important.

Who were the target stakeholders/publics to be reached and what did you need them to do?

Our focus was on senior cycle students, particularly Transition Year and Leaving Certificate pupils, and their teachers. We needed them to drive battery recycling within their schools: launching collections, rallying others, and sharing their efforts.

Secondary stakeholders included school principals, local authorities, and community groups, who helped champion the programme. Crucially, schools piloting the new Leaving Certificate subject for September 2025, Climate Action and Sustainable Development, were a key target. By aligning with this curriculum, schools were encouraged to adopt recycling as a practical, measurable climate action - fostering long-term behaviour change and positioning students as leaders of environmental impact.

What was the strategy and plan of action undertaken to deliver the objective?

To reverse the drop in participation, we started with research - consulting stakeholders, data analysis of two years of school engagement, and reviewing the new Climate Action and Sustainable Development subject. From this, we gained four vital insights:

- Secondary students operate differently to those in primary schools favouring short project-based, student-led activities, especially during Transition Year.
- Curriculum alignment creates relevance and buy-in, particularly for schools adopting the new Leaving Certificate 'Climate Action and Sustainable Development' subject, which aims to develop students' capacity for meaningful action for a sustainable world.
- There was untapped potential in leveraging community links via local authorities, community groups and local businesses to reinforce and amplify school action.
- The key driver for recycling batteries was knowing it helps the environment according to findings from WEEE Ireland's annual consumer research tracker.

Based on these insights we shaped a layered strategy built on four pillars:

1. Targeted Communications

We segmented schools by level and created bespoke messaging for secondary students. This avoided the one-size-fits-all approach of past campaigns and allowed for student-centric storytelling. Furthermore we focused only on those counties in which WEEE operates its battery recycling scheme.

2. Creative, Engaging Content

We developed engaging assets, including photos and video testimonials from previous winners and teachers in secondary schools, that told real student stories. Campaign toolkits were developed for schools, local authorities, and curriculum-linked classrooms.

3. Smart Distribution Channels

We ran eight targeted newsletters to more than 2,800 schools - customised for secondary versus primary - and launched separate e-newsletters for the 34 schools trialling the new Leaving Cert subject.

A paid social campaign spotlighted secondary school specific content created by students, while

School and Community Engagement

Local authorities and community groups shared assets and encouraged school uptake through direct communications and digital platforms, while local businesses got involved by donating their used batteries.

This broad, multi-channel output strategy created a surround-sound effect -ensuring the campaign was seen, heard, and felt across Ireland’s education and environmental networks.

What was the impact of your campaign?

The results were transformative - reversing a downward trend and achieving record engagement from senior cycle schools for the programme period September 2024 to March 2025.

Battery Collection Soared

The number of AA batteries collected for recycling jumped by a staggering 253% amongst secondary schools alone — equivalent to 274,750 AA batteries from 77,850 the previous year. This not only met WEEE Ireland targets but smashed it, demonstrating meaningful behavioural change.

Participation Surge

Secondary school participation increased by 38% increase - a clear sign that the campaign’s tailored, student-focused approach struck a chord.

Curriculum-Driven Success

21% of the 34 schools offering the new Climate Action Leaving Cert subject signed up after receiving tailored campaign materials. This confirmed our belief that curriculum alignment drives real-world action.

Shifting Student Attitudes

Testimonials revealed that students now better understand the environmental risks of improper disposal, including emerging waste types like vapes.

Creativity and Ownership

Students demonstrated deep ownership and engagement creating mascots, launching mini social campaigns, and producing their own Tik Toks. This peer-led creativity also boosted in-school excitement and visibility.

Community Ripple Effect

The campaign didn’t stop at the school gates. Local authorities, Tidy Towns groups and local businesses helped broaden impact, sparking recycling conversations in homes and communities.

Media Momentum

Overall media reach more than tripled (220%), helping position battery recycling as a national issue worth attention - especially through student-led storytelling. Eighty-seven pieces of coverage were generated across print, online and broadcast media, reaching 19 million people. These included xx regional articles and a range of national print, online and broadcast pieces on RTE, the Irish Independent, Irish Sun, Irish Daily Star, Today FM, Red FM. Broadcast coverage totalled 32 pieces with a reach of 3.26 million, while online reached 15.5 million.

Lasting Change

Several schools reported that battery recycling is now embedded in their Green Schools or climate

action projects, indicating long-term habit formation.

The Schools Battery Recycling Programme has become vital to WEEE Ireland's ability to meet the EU's 50% battery recycling target. Student participation plays a crucial role in maintaining compliance and driving long-term environmental impact. Without this, Ireland would risk falling short of its legally binding obligations.

But the campaign delivered more than numbers. It reframed battery recycling for a new generation -linking it to curriculum, creativity, and community. It proved that with the right strategy, students will not only act, they will lead the charge.

What was unique/innovative about this campaign?

This campaign stood out for how it turned a decline into an opportunity and transformed students into sustainability leaders. It innovated by aligning with the pilot Leaving Cert subject on Climate Action, directly tying national curriculum reform to practical school action.

Instead of generic outreach, it focused on segmentation, delivering tailored communications and assets for older students who are often harder to engage.

It also gave students the tools and trust to lead, encouraging them to create their own content, mascots, and messages.

Few recycling campaigns speak in the voice of older teenagers; fewer still activate local authorities, educators, media, and policymakers in unison.

The result: a 253% surge in collections amongst secondary schools, record engagement, and a new generation of battery recycling champions who saw their actions reflected in national media, classroom content, and community pride.