


EcoPlay : A place for all the family and visitors to explore, discover and learn about the unique endemic ecology of Monserrat and celebrate the special culture of this Leeward Caribbean Island. It is designed as a launchpad into the ecospace for discovery and social events with story telling and music at its heart.

# ECOPLAY

Montserrat National Trust

 Dennis Sharp Architects©

## Press Release

Rising from the Ashes

Dennis Sharp Architects design



# EcoPlay for the Montserrat National Trust.

Friday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021

In the shadow of an active volcano, on the Caribbean Island of Montserrat, EcoPlay aims to connect a community with its ecological roots through innovative architecture. The striking endemic Montserrat oriole is its inspiration.

Director of Dennis Sharp Architects, Yasmin Shariff said:

*"Montserrat EcoPlay brings a very special creative architectural approach that expresses who we are and where we live in a way that local people and visitors can learn from and enjoy - supporting the wellbeing and success of future generations."*

The project is connected to Montserrat National Trust's botanical gardens and adjacent to a school. It will provide facilities for young children under the age of 6 years as well as older children, adults, families and visitors to the island.

A multi-functional building at the top of the site incorporates disabled facilities, a room for playing and learning as well as a small kitchenette. Eco features include naturally ventilated spaces with solar hot water and high levels of daylight to minimize the use of electricity. A roof terrace provides a secure play area for young children and breathtaking views across the tree canopy to the Caribbean Sea.

The island's Governor, Andrew Pearce, commented,

*"Nature especially in Montserrat, has been a great joy in my, and my wife's, lives. This imaginative project launched by the National Trust will we hope to engage the island's youngsters and nurture in them the skills and values they will need as the next generation of custodians of our incredible planet. This Children's ECO Park in Montserrat is a step on that journey for us all."*

Premier of Montserrat Hon Joseph E Farrell also states:

*"EcoPlay contributes directly to Montserrat's development goal of sustainable use and management of the environment and natural resources. The Government of Montserrat highly commends this initiative spearheaded by the Montserrat National Trust, to preserve our rich biodiversity and heritage assets in a playful and creative presentation for our young people"*

Director of the Montserrat National Trust, Mrs Sarita Francis said:

*"For over 50 years, the MNT, has been involved in providing opportunities for residents on island to appreciate and interact with Montserrat's rich biodiversity. We have always worked with our partners on island and overseas to carry out our mandate of "Preserving the Past, Protecting the Present and Enriching the Future". This Project is about investing in Future Generations who will have a safe, dynamic space created for learning and playing".*

Young people are actively encouraged to interact with the building and its natural features. An 'orchid wall' in the learning space will showcase some of the island's unique orchid cultivars including the endemic Montserrat orchid - *Epidendrum montserratense*. The treehouse, climbing wall and musical play are inspired by the island's cultural and natural heritage. At the heart of the scheme lies an amphitheater for storytelling and events. Growing terraces encourage young people to get their hands dirty and get involved in cultivation of a variety of plants e.g. healthy food, medicinal plants, endemics.

Executive Director, UK based NGO, UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum said:

*"Many of the future custodians of the extraordinary and unique wildlife found on Montserrat will have some of their first sound, taste, smell, touch experiences of nature at EcoPlay. They will be given the freedom, in those important early years, to see the joy, inspiration and other benefits humans can gain from time in nature. As a long-term partner, we are delighted again to help Montserrat National Trust in this exciting project and are pleased to welcome others in supporting conservation in UK's Overseas Territories."*

Caribbean Programmes Manager, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, Luke Jones said:

*"The MNT have been working in collaboration with the local government and international NGOs for decades in their mandate to conserve and protect the valuable Heritage of this unique Caribbean island. This facility will provide countless opportunities for new generations of youth to engage and connect with both their natural and cultural heritage. Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust have partnered with MNT in developing novel opportunities and nature connection strategies to ensure youth and the greater community connect with the wildlife around them, this EcoPlay centre will be an excellent asset in ensuring that vision is met."*

Out of the ashes of the tragic volcanic eruption that devastated most of the island and completely obliterated the capital city of Plymouth, EcoPlay brings hope and an opportunity for regeneration and inclusiveness especially for young people and the wildlife of the island.

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Donations: <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/appeals/eco-play-montserrat/>

Interviews can be arranged with:



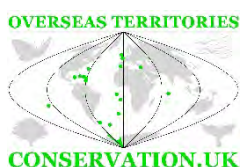
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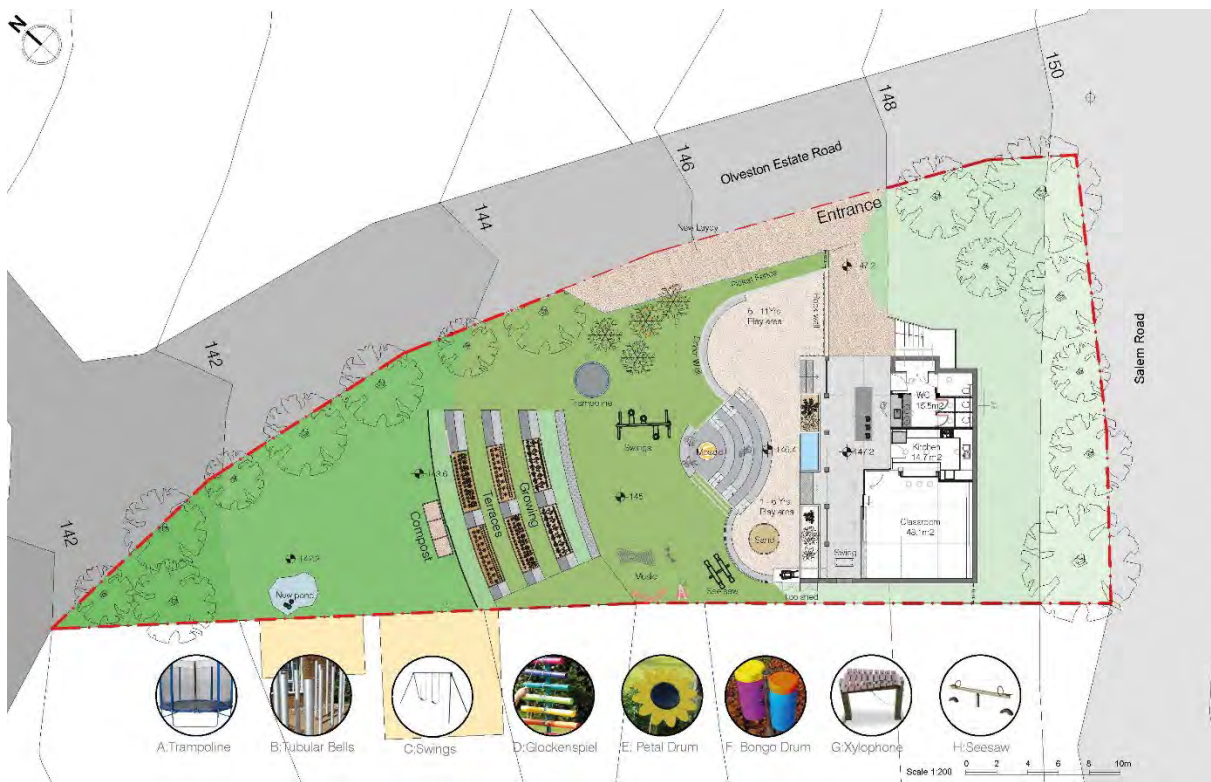


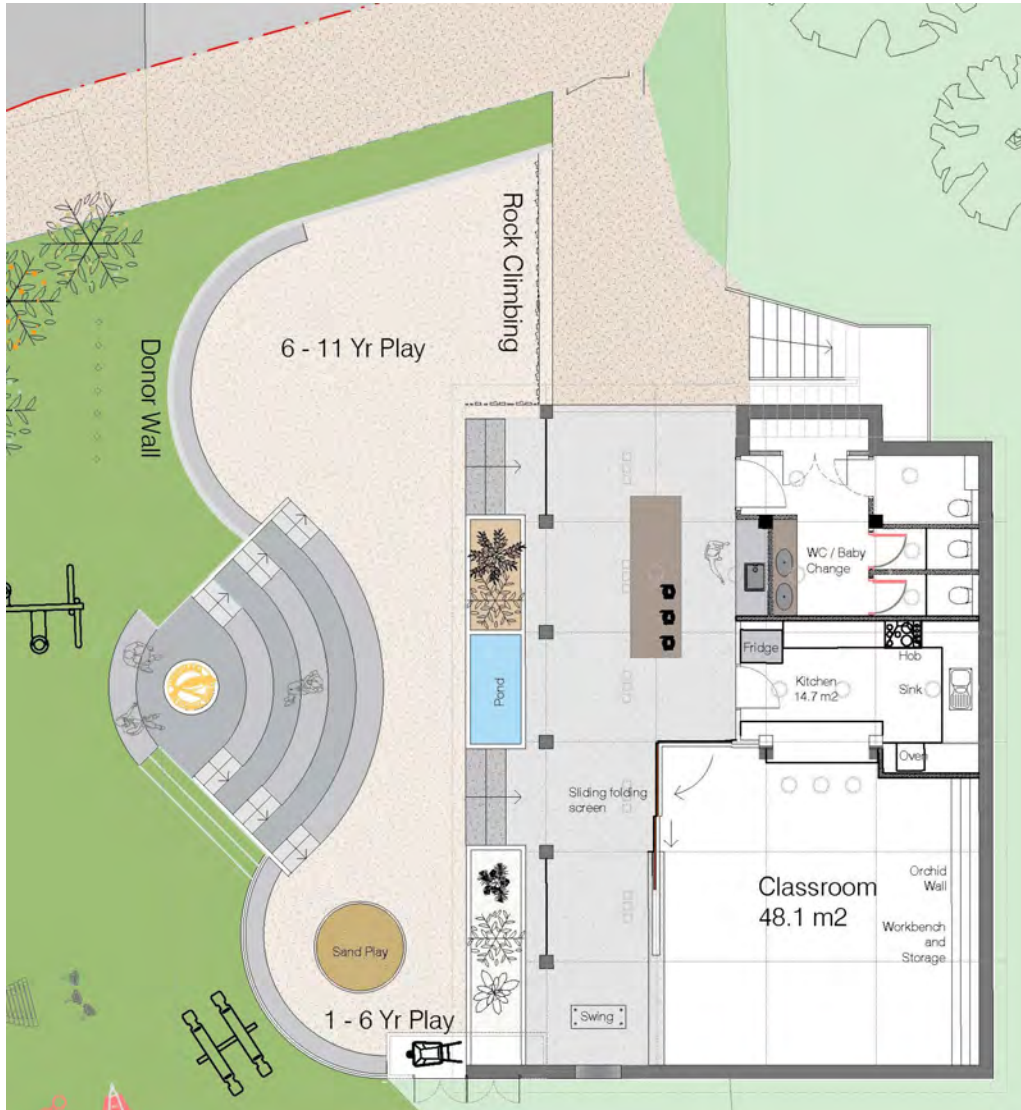
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**EcoPlay**  
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## Notes for Editors

### The Island and the Volcano

Montserrat, a British Overseas Territory (BOT) lies in the Leeward Islands of the Eastern Caribbean, some 48 km (30 miles) south-west of Antigua and has a population of around 5,000 people. On 18 July 1995, the previously dormant Soufriere Hills volcano, in the southern part of the island, erupted and buried the capital city of Plymouth. The volcano has been relatively quiet since early 2010 and continues to be closely monitored by the Montserrat Volcano Observatory.

### The Montserrat National Trust (MNT)

MNT's focus is on environmental awareness and conservation. Established by statute in February 1970, MNT has been at the forefront of preserving and conserving the cultural, historic and archaeological heritage of the Island. MNT hosts and facilitates archaeological surveys conducted by Brown University, Columbia University and Wayne State University. MNT has many partners it works with on a variety of projects including:

- Durrell Wildlife on Mountain Chicken (frog) recovery: Montserrat lost all its frogs as a result of the Chytrid fungus. Some frogs were sent to the UK and about two dozen were brought back and are being bred in captivity through the Darwin Durrell Project. ,
- RSPB on several projects including on wetlands restoration
- UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum on a variety of conservation projects including the pilot 'Adopt a Home for Wildlife'.

MNT organises workshops for children on the island's special wildlife especially the oriole and mountain chicken, and the shy galliwasp. At EcoPlay school children will be involved in propagating and planting the endemic Pribby, *Rondelettia buxifolia*.

### Montserrat National Trust EcoPlay

EcoPlay has been designed with the following facilities:

- Rooftop terrace: play, exploration and observation
- Ground floor: disabled facilities, toilets, kitchenette, classroom for 30 students, orchid growing wall for displaying endemic **Montserrat orchids** - *Epidendrum montserratense*, outdoor terrace with swing seat, communal table, pond and planting troughs.
- Lower terrace: sand play area for children 2-6 years, climbing wall and exploration area for 7–18-year-olds.
- Amphitheatre seating up to 20 people designed for storytelling and musical performances.
- Play terrace for musical play and a seesaw for younger children.
- Play terrace for physical play including a trampoline and swings for older children.
- Growing terraces with six raised beds for cultivating herbs and vegetables and medicinal plants. There are composting areas so that children can learn about whole life cycles and all bio-digestible waste generated on the site is processed in this area.
- Pond to attract wildlife
- An area of natural habitat with a tree house for observation

## **Tourism**

Montserrat National Trust EcoPlay is also designed to cater for tourists. It will be possible to hold cultural events, introduce the special wildlife of the island and provide a base for hikers and walkers. EcoPlay will provide facilities to enable visitors to interact with islanders and promote activities for young people.

Events at EcoPlay will attract publicity and assist in the drive to promote tourism.

**Agriculture:** The endemic areas and growing terraces at EcoPlay have been designed to cultivate interest in young people to grow healthy food and plants that are indigenous to Montserrat.

## **Trade Industry and Commerce**

EcoPlay has a space for learning which can be used for training and activities stimulate commerce and cottage industries.

## **Social Policy**

EcoPlay will contribute to greater social interaction/integration. It has the potential to promote social justice and equality by empowering people and engendering pride in the culture and ecosystem of the island.

## **Education**

EcoPlay is focused on learning through play for young people and adults. The facilities proposed include a learning space, climbing wall, sand play area, swings, slides, tree house, trampoline, growing terraces and a range of musical play equipment. This project will greatly improve and support sustainable livelihoods by nurturing and stimulating the talents of young people, families and visitors to the island. There will be opportunities for youth training and interaction with visiting University researchers.

## **Health**

EcoPlay has well-being as its core value- encouraging physical play and mental stimulation in a dynamic, informed, ecological setting.

## **Strengthening Civil Society**

EcoPlay encourages greater participation by civil society and does this through play, fun and pride in the island's cultural and physical environments.

## **Improving External Relations through Promoting Environmental Sustainability**

EcoPlay will play a significant part in interacting with others communities in the Caribbean region including CARICOM/OECS neighbours by holding virtual and on-site events. Focusing on the islands' natural heritage showcased at the site and encouraging children to play and interact is something that is designed to be fun and a positive catalyst for fostering friendships and working on economic, ecological and climate change initiatives.

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## Endemic Flora and Fauna of Montserrat



### MONTSERRAT ORIOLE

*Scientific name:* **Icterus oberi**

*Category:* Ave

*Description:* A part of the body is yellow but most of it is black (Head, wings, tail)

*Size:* 10 inches



### BLIND SNAKE - WORM SNAKE

*Scientific name:* **Antillotyphlops monastus**

*Category:* Reptilia

*Description:* A very small pinkish snake, resembling an earthworm

*Size:* almost 1 foot



### TARANTULA

*Scientific name:* **Cyrtopholis femoralis**

*Category:* Arachnids

*Description:* Big brown and hairy spider

*Size:* The body can reach 3-4 inches



### GALLIWASP

*Scientific name:* **Diploglossus montiserrati**

*Class:* Reptilia

*Description:* Brown, shiny appearance, tiny scales, tiny legs.

*Size:* up to 2 feet



### PRIBBY

*Scientific name:* **Rondeletia buxifolia**

*Category:* Flowering plant

*Description:* evergreen shrub with dark green and round glossy leaves, with little orange flowers

*Size:* Plants can reach a maximum of 10 feet, but vary according to the environment condition



### GROUND LIZARD – MONTISERRAT AMEIVA

*Scientific name:* **Ameiva Pluvianotata**

*Class:* Reptilia

*Description:* Bluish-grey, male are usually more bright color

*Size:* ~ 1 foot

