

**Children and Young People's
Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**

2 March 2020



Schools Engagement for Climate Emergency

**Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director Children and Young People's
Services**

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the engagement and opportunities for schools and young people to engage in climate change activities.

Executive Summary

2. Durham County Council has been supporting schools to reduce their carbon footprint and engage in energy related learning opportunities since 2010 with programmes such as the ECO₂.Smart Schools Programme.
3. The Enlighten programme is currently being piloted in schools and enables a whole school LED lighting retrofit. In 2019 Durham County Council adopted a bespoke Single Use Plastics pledge and encourages schools to sign up to the pledge to reduce their single use plastics.
4. Durham County Council Climate Emergency Response Plan has identified schools as a key sector to reduce carbon emissions from the school estate and encourage the next generation.

Recommendation

5. Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee (in conjunction with the Environment and Sustainable Communities) are requested to note the content of this update report and to continue to monitor progress as part of the Climate Emergency Response Plan.

Background

6. Schools have been engaging and supporting energy and climate change related activities for many years
7. Since 2010 Durham County Council (through its Energy Management SLA and Carbon Management Plan) has been supporting schools to reduce their own carbon footprint and engage in energy related learning opportunities
8. Schools are a key sector for Durham County Councils' estate, they account for more than half of the emissions from DCC buildings.

Existing Support and Opportunities

9. The ECO₂ Smart Schools Programme (rebranded in 2018 from School Carbon Reduction Programme) has consistently supported schools since 2010 across the County, that are part of the Energy Management Service Level Agreement. It could support all schools in the County but they would need to fund this engagement. The recently launched supporting website provides information for schools on practical savings, learning opportunities and climate change related information. Schools energy data is provided through the Energy Manager Live Portal (all member schools have access)
10. Enlighten is a new programme presently being piloted with schools. This enables whole school LED lighting retro-fit, supported through the Energy SLA. The light fittings are supplied through the DCC framework and are being installed by Building and Facilities Management. The installation is funded through a 0% interest loan from the Salix Finance scheme. The repayments are made through the electricity savings and lower running costs of the new lights. Loans can be repaid over a maximum of 8 years. In addition to lower costs and carbon savings, the quality of the light is also better, aiding concentration and wellbeing.
11. Existing opportunities also include:
 - Earth Hour 2020 (Friday 27th March, 2-3pm)
 - The Single Use Plastics Pledge (<http://www.durham.gov.uk/singleuseplastics>)
 - Two AAP funded projects (Plastic Fantastic? and Building a Waste Free Future) both developed and run by partner charity OASES
 - Children 4 Climate Change Project – led by OASES with support from Durham University and Northumbrian Water Ltd
12. The 'Make Your Mark' young people's survey that took place in Autumn 2019 with over 15,000 respondents aged 11-18 identified Environment as the top priority. This will be acted upon through the new Youth Council currently being established

New Opportunities

13. The Climate Emergency Response Plan agreed on 12th February 2020 identifies schools as a key sector to reduce carbon emissions from the school estate and as a way to engage the next generation
14. The benefits of trees and tree planting were identified in the consultation as priority. Cllr Carl Marshall also pledged a tree would be planted for every child in school in the County. Plans are currently being developed so that children and young people are able to engage with appropriate tree planting schemes across the County starting from the next planting season in Winter 2020.
15. Low Carbon heat in the schools sector is challenge, this needs further investigation and pilot projects identified.
16. Through the Energy Management SLA we are keen to support and work closely with schools to identify new opportunities to further reduce emissions and raise knowledge and understanding of the wider climate change agenda.

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – Significant financial savings have been made through carbon reduction intervention; these can be increased through wider engagement and more opportunities being made available to schools.

Staffing - None

Risk - Durham County Council has declared a climate emergency and set targets against a backdrop of national and international protest and will mitigate any risk by undertaking detailed planning and consultation.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – A changing climate will impact on everyone, across the world, but research suggests that the poorest people are likely to suffer the worst impacts, so reducing carbon emissions now will contribute to future equality

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder – None

Climate Change – this directly supports the actions of the Climate Emergency Response Plan

Human Rights – None

Consultation – None

Procurement - None

Disability Issues – None

Legal Implications – None