

Item:

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

20th September 2024



**Support for Schools for
Energy Management and
Carbon Reduction**

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

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the report is to provide members of Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the support available for schools to help them reduce their energy usage, associated costs and carbon emissions.

Executive summary

- 2 Support for participating schools and academies through the Energy Management Service Level Agreement continues to adapt to meet their needs.
- 3 This support is provided by a mix of online tools as well as support from Officers centrally and in-school through our contracted delivery partner.
- 4 Feedback from young people has been sought as part of the Climate Emergency Response Planning.
- 5 The emissions from maintained schools on the council carbon footprint continues to be significant.

Recommendations

- 6 Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the contents of the report.

Background

- 7 Schools have been supported with their energy management for many years, and this support has changed and adapted over the years.
- 8 Since 2010 Durham County Council (through its Energy Management SLA and previous Carbon Management Plan) has been supporting schools to reduce their own carbon footprint and engage in energy related learning opportunities.
- 9 Schools are important institutions to help promote wider climate change awareness and understanding as well as practical energy management issues.

Existing Support for Schools

10. 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. This is managed through the Low Carbon Economy Team (Neighbourhoods and Climate Change) and delivered in partnership with Education Durham support. The in-school support element is contracted and is currently delivered by a Durham based charity OASES. At the start of this financial year we had 242 schools involved – a mix of maintained and academies and all phases.
 - (a) All member schools can access their energy data via the <https://durham.energymanagerlive.com/> portal, enabling them to track and monitor usage.
 - (b) A dedicated website <https://eco2smartschools.org.uk/> provides a wealth of resources for schools, some information is open access, member schools access more once logged in.
 - (c) All member schools receive in-school support – schools can choose each year how they use their allocated support time from a menu of opportunities.
 - (d) A programme of training targeted at different school staff is promoted. Sessions for School Business Managers; Site Staff; teachers and for Governors are offered on a termly basis. Sessions via Teams work well. In person sessions are also offered for teachers.

11. The programme is adapting its support for multi academy trusts to meet their needs as they continue to grow, providing a centralised model upon request to drive forward energy savings.
12. Enlighten – LED Retrofit scheme. A revised framework was developed and made available to schools wishing to install LED lighting in their schools. The revised scheme is with Thorn Lighting who undertake the surveys and specifications. Schools wishing to engage request support from the ECO₂ Smart Schools programme. We then liaise with key staff and can also present the options to the Governing Body before they commit. The installation is then coordinated by DCC Construction Consultancy Service. Loan funding is available to maintained schools to cover the capital cost of the projects. The loan is repaid by the electricity savings made from the more efficient lighting. Due to cost pressures this model is proving difficult to deliver.
13. Solar PV Generation. We have encouraged and supported schools to explore the opportunities for solar photovoltaic electricity generation for many years. The availability of capital investment has often been a problem. Some schools and academies have signed up to schemes with providers who fund the upfront cost. The most common being Solar for Schools (<https://www.solarforschools.co.uk/>). This scheme is based on a power purchase model where schools pay the company for the electricity they use generated from the solar panels on their roof at a lower starting cost than grid electricity.
14. We have also directly supported a smaller number of schools with solar PV systems where they have the capital to invest or where a roof was being replaced or upgraded. Financially this usually provides better returns but the limits to capital investment in schools are a challenge. Solar PV can also be ground mounted where the roof is unsuitable, successful ground schemes include Woodland Primary and St Johns Chapel Primary schools.
15. To date we have been successful with one school bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) for Woodland Primary School. This included a full retrofit of the heating system, from oil to 4 air source heat pumps, LED lighting retrofit and a ground mounted solar PV system.
16. DCC submitted a number of maintained school sites to the Low Carbon Skills Fund with Salix Finance. This bid was successful, the funding will enable the development of a decarbonisation plan using external contractors. Schools to benefit are: Cassop Primary School; Cotherstone Primary School; Montalbo Nursery and Primary School;

Nettlesworth Primary School; Ramshaw Primary School; Durham Trinity School and Sports College and Walworth School.

It has been difficult to develop future school projects due to the limitations in providing matched funding for the PSD Scheme. It is nationally very competitive, but Salix have allocated a third of the funding for schools which may help moving forward.

International Engagement

17. We took the opportunity to link our educational support with the COP26 event that was hosted in Glasgow in 2021. Working in partnership with the International Office, Durham University and OASES we developed a series of online live sessions to enable pupils from County Durham schools to ask questions of an expert panel and interact and share their learning with pupils from schools from around the world. These sessions are called ECO2COP.
18. Since the first sessions in Autumn 2021 we have now successfully run three online conference programmes.
19. ECO2COP28 being the most recent took place on 6th and 7th December 2023. Over 100 schools from 16 countries took part in the interactive, sessions. Pupils were encouraged to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences of climate change, and had the opportunity to ask their climate change and energy questions to a panel of experts. Schools also made pledges of climate action for the year ahead. In addition, educational resources were developed for teachers in advance of the online sessions for different age groups (ages 7-9, 9-11 and 11+).
<https://eco2smartschools.org.uk/eco2cop28schoolsclimateconference/>
20. A follow up session took place as part of Durham Global Week on 28th February to learn from Durham University staff who attended COP28 in Dubai, about what was achieved at the event and what is planned for COP29 in Azerbaijan. New ECO2COP29 sessions will coincide with COP29 in Azerbaijan this year on 13th & 14th November for primary and secondary schools.

Department for Education Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy

21. The Department for Education produced a new strategy for Sustainability and Climate Change in April 2022. It aims to make the UK a world leading education sector in sustainability and climate change by 2030.
22. Additional support for schools is being structured through a series of national programmes. The first is the National Education Nature Park

(<https://www.educationnaturepark.org.uk/>) . Two new programmes have recently been announced that will provide an online resource hub and regional support throughout England through the Climate Ambassadors programme. We are liaising with national partners to align this additional support with our existing programmes.

Climate Emergency Response Planning

21. Education and Awareness raising has been a key theme of the climate emergency response plans to date, with the influence of young people and schools being seen as important routes to engage young people and their families and communities.
22. As part of the planning for the latest CERP3 we worked with the Durham Youth Council to develop a simple survey for young people to complete. This was also shared by the Youth Council and through ECO2 Smart Schools and we received over 550 responses. Their key feedback has influenced the development of the latest CERP.
23. The carbon emissions from schools and academies are significant and are providing a real challenge to Durham meeting its climate targets. Maintained school emissions are included in the 2030 Durham Net Zero target and Academies included in the countywide 2045 target outlined in the Climate Emergency Response Plan 3, agreed by Cabinet on 10th July 2024. A new sub group of the Net Zero Investment and Monitoring Board has been established to direct, prioritize and enable whole school retrofit projects with maintained schools.

Conclusion

24. There is a wide range of support available for schools across County Durham helping them with their energy management and learning. Support is flexible to meet the needs of schools and is adapting to meet the needs of multi academy trusts as they expand.

Maintained school emissions will be a key focus moving forward towards the 2030 net zero target. To achieve it will require significant capital investment to decarbonise their operations.

Background papers

- none

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable

Finance

Not applicable

Consultation

Children and young people have been consulted through Durham Youth Council and the ECO2 Smart Schools programme to influence CERP3

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

No implications

Human Rights

No implications

Climate Change

This activity is helping to reduce DCC climate impacts

Crime and Disorder

No implications

Staffing

No implications

Accommodation

Emissions from schools and academies are a significant element of our carbon emissions and in many cases linked to underinvestment in the school estate over many years.

Risk

Not supporting schools and academies would likely increase carbon emissions and associated energy costs

Procurement

Sustainability, environmental impacts and social value are all included in procurement regulations