

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services Committee
DATE	21 March 2023
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	2022 Education Climate Change Report
REPORT NUMBER	CFS/23/084
DIRECTOR	Eleanor Sheppard
CHIEF OFFICER	Shona Milne
REPORT AUTHOR	Stuart Craig
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report updates Committee on some of the key events that took place in schools to educate children and young people about Climate Change and the drive towards Net Zero during 2022. The report also highlights the ideas and solutions provided by children and young people, including the proposals that have come from the Youth Climate Change Group for the allocation of their £150,000 of funding.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 note the summary of key Climate Change highlights that took place in schools to educate children and young people about Climate Change and the drive towards [Net Zero](#) since 2021;
- 2.2 note the plans for a further event for secondary pupils organised by the Youth Climate Change President and Vice presidents to help shape city approach to Net Zero and Climate Change;
- 2.3 instruct the Chief Education Officer to support the process of appointing a new Youth Climate Change President and Vice Presidents for session 2023-2024 to allow the work that has begun in 2022 to continue; and
- 2.4 instruct the Chief Education Officer to report back on progress in one calendar year.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1.1 The report presented to the former Education Operational Delivery Committee on 26th January 2022 reported a series of suggestions for change from city school pupils. Suggestions were broadly aligned with four core themes:

- Environmental improvements

- More recycling and a reduction in waste
 - Greater investment in clean and renewable energy production
 - Buying local produce and reducing consumption
- 3.1.2 The Committee instructed that a COP event be established in the Town House to help explore the themes raised by young people more fully. Members also requested that the event be presided over by a young person and that this young person be asked to share the thoughts of young people at a special meeting of the Education Operational Delivery Committee. The COP event provided an opportunity for young people to explore the themes identified in 3.1.1 more fully.
- 3.1.3 Our Youth Climate Change President, Charles Turner, has chaired monthly Pupil Climate Change Group meetings throughout 2022. Accompanying Charles Turner in his role have been Best Abalaka, Harlaw Academy, and Aurora MacDonald, Aberdeen Grammar School, as Youth Climate Change Vice Presidents. These meetings have been a combination of online sessions and a hybrid of both online and in-person meetings as covid mitigations dissipated during 2022. These meetings have provided an opportunity to reflect on some of the activity taking place in our schools and also to think about how young people can best support the climate change agenda.

3.2 KEY 2022 CLIMATE CHANGE HIGHLIGHTS FROM SCHOOLS.

- 3.2.1 School Eco Committees continue to drive change at school level. There is clear evidence that school committees are becoming more ambitious with some of the highlights outlined below.
- 3.2.2 During 2022 a further 10 schools received a Green Flag Award from Keep Scotland Beautiful.
- 3.2.3 Glashieburn Primary School started work on the LEAF (Learning About Forests) programme with staff from Keep Scotland Beautiful. The LEAF programme rests on the belief that children need to experience nature both for themselves and for society. There is a recognition that with more than half the world's population living in urban areas, the need to connect with nature is even more important.
- 3.2.4 Five primary schools participated in live lessons as part of the Keep Scotland Beautiful programme. These live lessons supported schools on Climate Education, Learning for Sustainability, and their Eco-Schools work. The lessons are delivered online via Microsoft Teams, as a whole week of short sessions, or as a Monday morning of workshops followed by a live assembly on the Friday. Lessons were accompanied by classroom activities and teaching notes.
- 3.2.5 Bucksburn Academy pupils engaged in a yearlong climate change interdisciplinary project. Their focus was the question "How can we eat to save the planet?" Pupils researched their food choices and how they impact the planet. They were also able to demonstrate how eating locally grown food can make a big difference to reducing our carbon footprint. Ten young people also

visited the Countryside Classroom on Wheels in February which brought livestock, crops, and feedstock to the school with the aim of increasing awareness of the animals and plants raised on Scottish farms. At the end of the project a book was produced with tips for “Eating to Save the Planet” and recipes using locally sourced ingredients.

- 3.2.6 The Wee Forest Project was launched as an outdoor learning space at Woodside Primary School on March 21, 2022. The project aims to promote outdoor education and environmental stewardship by providing children with an opportunity to learn in a natural setting. The space includes a variety of features such as a raised bed garden, sensory plantings, and a willow hut. The project was funded by various organizations, including the Scottish Government and the Woodland Trust. The Wee Forest Project hopes to expand the programme to other schools in the future, and to continue to encourage children to explore and learn about nature. The Woodside Wee Forest complements a nearby outdoor classroom presenting many opportunities for school and community engagement. The Woodside Wee Forest provides places to play in a natural setting and opportunities to enjoy nature, with benefits for mental and physical health. As well as local schools and communities being involved in design and planting, the Wee Forest will have a “Tree Keeper Team” of local volunteers to look after it and measure its benefits for nature and people. The Woodside Wee Forest will join a group of 20 such forests across Scotland which are being planted.
- 3.2.7 On the 1st and 2nd June almost 4000 North East pupils were invited to attend the 2021 Lift Off & Grow online event. This event aimed to inform and inspire young people about the variety of career and study opportunities in the region as it rose to the challenge of climate change. Seventy-five employers from across the Northeast participated in this event with presentations and interactive discussions. The event was launched by Megan McCubbin. A zoologist, wildlife TV presenter and conservationist, Megan is best-known for her appearances on BBC’s Springwatch, Autumnwatch and Winterwatch programmes. The event also saw the launch of the Climate Solutions Accelerator programme. The SCQF accredited online training programme gives pupils an understanding of climate change science and policies, giving them insight into how the issue will change society and the opportunities in tackling it. Many senior pupils completed the course gaining them a further SQA qualification.
- 3.2.8 Primary 7 young people from Ashley Road Primary School were involved in an interactive climate change challenge in June. The challenge tasked the young people with the design and marketing of an interactive climate change game. The final at the University of Aberdeen was the culmination of a seven-month project run by the University and the retailer Geek Retreat. Judges were impressed by the high standards set by the group with the students taking on the brief and demonstrating a high level of creativity.
- 3.2.9 In November there was a celebration of several Climate Change and Net Zero activities that had taken place over the session at NESCOL, as part of World Children’s Day. Children and young people from across the city gathered with Aberdeen City Councillors to showcase their work. The theme of World Children’s Day in 2022 was “Inclusion for Every Child”. Young people at the

event highlighted their involvement in the City Centre and Beach Masterplan and the model they created to demonstrate what they would like to see included in these plans. Charles Turner, the Youth Climate Change President, also had the opportunity to discuss his role and the work of the Youth Climate Change group. S1 pupils from Bucksburn Academy also presented their interdisciplinary project: "Eating to Save the Planet".

3.2.10 The Aberdeen final of the Scottish Schools Hydrogen Challenge took place in November at the Beach Ballroom. The final featured winning teams from Secondary Schools after they had participated in heats throughout November. Teams were led by STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) professionals and volunteers from the University of Aberdeen, where pupils were tasked with designing and building a hydrogen fuel-cell powered car using custom-designed LEGO kits and 2W fuel-cells. Grand prizes were awarded to Oldmachar Academy and Cults Academy who were also invited to represent Aberdeen in the Inter-City Grand Final, which will take place on the 13th March 2023, hosted at the Aberdeen Science Centre.

3.3 UPDATE FROM THE PUPIL CLIMATE CHANGE GROUP

3.3.1 Charles Turner was appointed as Youth Climate Change President in February 2022. This was to recognise that there was not a representation of pupil voice in the climate change activities of the city, as we drive towards becoming net zero. The intention was for the Youth Climate Change President to provide a platform, through regular meetings with young people, to be a spokesperson for them to get their ideas on climate change heard.

3.3.1 In April 2022 Charles Turner chaired his first Youth Climate Change meeting at Marischal College. This was a hybrid meeting with many pupils online as well as representatives from various sectors of the council attending in-person. Alongside Education colleagues there was representation from the planning team who were present to answer questions from the group as well as providing more information about the climate change goals within city strategy.

3.3.2 From that first meeting in April the group has grown in numbers. Main ideas and areas of discussion this year have included:

- Improved public transport - especially night buses.
- Better cycling and walking connectivity – with improved signposting
- Greater promotion of net zero goals and what people can do to help
- Focus on reducing paper and single use plastics usage.

3.3.3 Officers have sought feedback from the young people as Council policies and plans have been developed with an example of this being the bike sharing scheme. This cycling scheme was launched late last year, and the Youth Climate Change group have actively promoted the scheme through their social media channels.

- 3.3.4 At times, the group has requested meetings with a range of Council Officers to question current practice. An example of such challenge would be when the group were calling for the reintroduction of reusable crockery in all school canteens. After a meeting with catering services, it was clear that a strategy was already underway to ensure that recycling and waste was reduced within school canteens.
- 3.3.5 The Youth Climate Change group arranged a meeting with NESCOL. The group were keen to explore using their funds to support the creation and implementation of new courses that would deliver qualifications and a greater understanding of Net Zero. Through these discussions it was discovered that planning for courses that covered climate change and Net Zero were already underway and didn't require financial investment from the Group.
- 3.3.6 A further idea that the group dedicated a lot of discussion towards was supporting and improving cycle lanes across Aberdeen. The group wanted to explore expanding bike lanes and linking areas across the city with more straightforward and safe cycle lanes. Meetings were arranged with the Climate and Environment Policy Manager of Aberdeen City Council. During the meeting it became clear that the funding of such a project would have to go through town planning, to cover the infrastructure elements, and would also likely be too expensive for the budget that the group had access to. The group were satisfied however that their ideas had been listened to and had helped inform City Masterplanning.
- 3.3.7 The group has learned a great deal in the past 10 months. The Youth Climate Change President and the group members have been able to focus on a number of areas that are important to them. Through discussions with key staff in Aberdeen City Council and NESCOL they have been able to see the challenges that there are in large scale projects and have a greater appreciation of how they can help influence existing plans and strategies.
- 3.3.8 The Group sought advice from a range of partners and Officers to inform their thinking over how to allocate their funding. This has included NESCAN (Northeast Scotland's Community Climate Action Resource Network), Education Scotland's Learning for Sustainability team and Keep Scotland Beautiful. NESCAN have been helpful as they have been able to describe and demonstrate the methods the group could use for allocating funds to smaller scale local projects in schools. The Youth Climate Change group has now agreed to award funding to individual school run eco groups to build a sense of collective responsibility and ownership across the children and young people of the city. The Group are currently in discussions over how to allocate funds and measure impact.
- 3.3.9 Over the last 10 months the Youth Climate Change Group have been able to increase their awareness of the local authority's policies towards climate change and net zero by inviting guests from several council departments to their meetings. Alongside regular meetings the group have created a Google Classroom space for the creation and collaboration of further ideas for sustainability. There is also an active discussion forum that the group has created. For example, the Eco Group at Harlaw Academy were able to collate

information from this space to inform a meeting with catering staff to lead to a return of sustainable food packaging in schools. The group are also a focal point to promote citywide initiatives to other children and young people across the city.

3.3.10 Education Scotland's Learning for Sustainability team have been very interested in the appointment of Aberdeen's Youth Climate Change President and the group that he chairs. It is the first appointment of this kind in Scotland and demonstrates the eagerness to place the voices of children and young people at the centre of policies and decision making that will impact them in Aberdeen. Charles Turner has attended two sessions with Education Scotland where he presented to education climate change leads from across the country describing his role and the impact the Youth Climate Change group can have.

3.3.11 A blog from Charles describing his first six months as Youth Climate Change President can be found in the Appendix or from [this link](#).

3.4 FUTURE PLANS

3.4.1 Education, and other council departments, will continue to support and promote the Youth Climate Change group. This will involve supporting them in plans to allocate funds to our schools. Importantly there will also be the need to appoint a successor to Charles Turner as Youth Climate Change President. The selection process for this appointment will be a major focus for Charles Turner and members of the group in the next few months.

3.4.2. An important youth climate change event is to be arranged for April 2023. This will be led by the Youth Climate Change president and the Youth Climate Change group. This event will be a presentation of the City's Net Zero routemap and the challenges that exist within these aims. Young people will have the task of considering these challenges in groups and working out the options and solutions that could be followed. This event will give pupils a greater understanding of their local area and the challenges that are being faced. They will also gain an idea of what these challenges are locally building on the global concerns that they have looked at during previous citywide youth events. It will give that local rather than global context so that pupils can look at the city Net Zero Routemap and help formulate solutions. Aberdeen City Council's Climate Change Plan Oversight Group, which has representation from a range of Council Clusters, will be helping to facilitate this event.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications. The Group were awarded £150,000 at the Council Budget meeting of 7th March 2022 and will use this resource to support local school projects.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications from this report.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Risk of not planning effectively for Net Zero	Working in collaboration with young people and enabling them to be heard in decisions which will impact them helps reduce the risk in this area.	L	Yes
Compliance	As we work to become a Child Friendly City there is a risk in not engaging young people in strategic decision making	Establishing the monthly Pupil Group will enable us to hear directly from young people and give them a direct opportunity to shape our plans	L	Yes
Operational	Risk of attendance at the group impacting negatively on pupil attendance at lessons	Timings will be agreed with the young people and their school to ensure that pupils face no detriment.	L	Yes
Financial				Yes
Reputational	Risk of not achieving Net Zero	The establishment of this Pupil Group will help us better realise our plans	M	Yes
Environment / Climate	Risk of not achieving Net Zero	The establishment of this Pupil Group will help us better realise our plans	M	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of Children & Young People Stretch Outcome 7 in the LOIP: Child Friendly City which supports all children to prosper and engage actively with their communities by 2026.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 14: Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by 42.5% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate.
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	<p>The National Improvement Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Authorities are under a duty to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of education of school education which is provided in the schools managed by them and to carry out the duty with a view to achieving the strategic priorities set out in the National Improvement Framework.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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