

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education and Children's Services Committee
<b>DATE</b>	30 April 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	2023-24 Education Climate Change Report
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	F&C/24/118
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Eleanor Sheppard
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Shona Milne
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Stuart Craig
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	1.1.2

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report aims to update the Education and Children's Services Committee on some of the key events that have taken place within our schools to educate children and young people about Climate Change, Biodiversity and the drive towards Net Zero during school session 2023-24. The report also outlines the work from the Youth Climate Change Group over the school session.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee :-

- 2.1 note the summary of events that took place in schools to educate children and young people about Climate Change, Biodiversity and the drive towards Net Zero in session 2023-24;
- 2.2 note the work of the Youth Climate Change Group; and
- 2.3 instruct the Interim Chief Officer - Education and Lifelong Learning to report back on progress through Service Update within one calendar year.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 Schools have continued to engage positively to improve student knowledge of Biodiversity, Climate Change and the drive towards Net Zero.
- 3.2 Schools deliver biodiversity and climate change activities by integrating them into the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) through the Experiences and Outcomes framework. Biodiversity and climate change activities are addressed within the CfE through: Interdisciplinary Learning (IDL), Science, Social Studies, Outdoor Learning, cross-curricular themes, and citizenship and sustainable development
- 3.3 Biodiversity and climate change are often integrated into IDL projects, where students explore connections between different subjects such as science,

geography, and social studies. For example, students might study the impact of climate change on ecosystems, human societies, and biodiversity loss.

- 3.4 In the sciences curriculum, students explore topics related to biodiversity and climate change, such as ecosystems, environmental science, and Earth's systems. They learn about the causes and effects of climate change, the importance of biodiversity for ecosystem health, and human impacts on the environment.
- 3.5 Within social studies, students investigate the social, economic, and political dimensions of climate change and biodiversity conservation. They explore issues such as environmental justice, sustainable development, and global citizenship, considering how individuals and societies can address these challenges.
- 3.6 Schools in Aberdeen often emphasize outdoor learning experiences to connect students with nature and promote environmental stewardship. Outdoor activities such as field trips, nature walks, and habitat surveys provide opportunities for students to observe biodiversity, learn about local ecosystems, and understand the impacts of climate change firsthand.
- 3.7 Through citizenship education and sustainable development goals, students explore their roles as active citizens in addressing environmental challenges. They learn about sustainable practices, environmental conservation, and the importance of collective action to mitigate climate change and protect biodiversity.
- 3.8 Increasingly, schools are partnering with Keep Scotland Beautiful (KSB), Aberdeen for a Fairer World (AFW), North East Scotland Climate Action Network (NESCAN), and the Energy Transition Zone (ETZ), as well as several other partners, to support their work on Biodiversity, Climate Change and Net Zero.
- 3.9 All schools utilise pupil groups to involve students in environmental awareness, sustainability practices, and community engagement. These groups have a key role in developing environmental responsibility among students and encouraging active involvement in tackling climate change and biodiversity protection at the school level. Participation provides students with the opportunity to learn more about environmental issues, grow leadership skills, carry out practical solutions and become responsible global citizens.

### **KEY 2023 CLIMATE CHANGE HIGHLIGHTS FROM SCHOOLS**

- 3.10 Fourteen schools in Aberdeen have now been recognised as Eco Schools by Keep Scotland Beautiful (KSB). Glashieburn Primary School continues to work on the LEAF (Learning About Forests) programme with staff from KSB. 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.
- 3.11 Aberdeen for a Fairer World (AFW) has worked with many schools across the city. Some highlights of their activities this session include the delivery and

further refinement of Place Based Plans with Woodside Primary School, St Machar Academy and Lochside Academy. [This link](#) takes you to a 4-minute video which outlines this work. All three schools have developed large posters with Map and Project Plans. Approximately 60 participating pupils have honed their skills, with an additional 200 students having their voices heard and acted upon.

- 3.12 AFW have been working with the Barn at Banchory to screen a Climate related film in the lead up to Climate Week Northeast in March 2024. S1-S3 pupils from Cults Academy, Harlaw Academy and St Machar Academy attended this event on 29<sup>th</sup> February. The workshop inspired the young people to take their learning back to their schools.
- 3.13 AFW are running monthly on-line sessions for teachers to support and promote the development of school grounds/gardens. Just under sixty teachers attended the January 2024 session on composting, and over forty staff attended the February 2024 session on Germination. We look forward to seeing how this training impacts on the work of the schools.
- 3.14 A number of further professional learning opportunities have been delivered by Aberdeen for a Fairer World. These sessions have covered a range of topics ranging from Climate Action, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Childrens Rights, Fair Trade, and Fashion. In each session there have been discussions about the intersectionality of ideas and connections between the topic and the Sustainable Development Goals, Children's Rights and social/environmental justice. For example, a session on fast fashion inevitably brings in a lot of discussion about sustainability, circular economy, recycling etc. Evaluations of each session have produced a positive average rating of 4.75 out of a possible 5.0 from attendees.
- 3.15 In addition to the above, AFW also led a session on Learning for Sustainability for all the Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) in Aberdeen at the start of the academic session. This is particularly important as we work to implement Scottish Governments [Target 2030: A Call to Action](#).
- 3.16 Some further highlights of activity taken forward at school level include:

**Film Screening and Workshop:** Held at St Machar Academy, Harlaw Academy, and Cults Academy, this event aimed to empower attendees to plan further climate-related work within their schools, with skills development being tracked.

**Climate Week Northeast and GREC:** Scheduled for March, these events will provide valuable insights and initial evaluations, contributing to ongoing efforts in climate action.

**Hazlehead Primary:** Informally, positive meetings with James Hutton indicate potential beneficial links with the school.

**Woodside Primary:** Woodside Primary School have worked on areas of equality and an understanding of global issues around biodiversity.

**St Machar Academy:** Environmental plans led to the gardening group securing Just Transition funding, revitalizing their momentum and ideas.

**Ashley Road Primary:** Focused work on global issues placing the school in a position to gain re-accreditation of their Gold Rights Respecting Schools Award. There has also been a focus on upgrading the school garden and playground area including planting to support diversity.

**Broomhill Primary:** Noteworthy work on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through creative writing and research by a P1 class. [The work the school completed exploring and celebrating Duthie park can also be found on BBC Scotland's website.](#)

**Harlaw Academy:** The eco group's collaboration with community partners has resulted in planting initiatives, demonstrating growth in skills and numbers.

**Oldmachar Academy:** Partnership involvement and support in Excelerate workshops and resources development showcase the school's dedication to fair trade and SDGs integration into their curriculum.

**St. Peters RC Primary School:** The Eco group are working towards their ECO flag. The work towards this recognition will include more recycling, reducing waste, developing garden spaces, looking at the recycling of clothes.

**Milltimber Primary School:** The school's Green Team have been focusing on cutting down traffic at pick up and drop off times with several initiatives including the WOW travel tracker, safe travel assemblies, and monitoring of traffic at these times.

**Kingswells Primary School:** The Kingswells group are focusing on recycling.

**Seaton Primary School:** The group are supporting the creation of a Travel Plan for the school that will encourage active travel and reduce the reliance on motor transportation.

**Kaimhill School:** There has been a focus on improving the school garden this year.

**Holy Family RC Primary School:** Working towards their ECO Flag and ensuring that all classes are reducing energy, recycling more, reducing waste and developing their outdoor space.

**Forehill Primary School:** Tree planting and the continuation of the Willow Dome.

**Danestone Primary School:** Glass gardens and planting of more plants and trees.

**Airyhall Primary School:** Work has been taking place on the school allotment. This will include the incorporation of ACC Bee Lines campaign to promote biodiversity and the growing of pollinating flowers.

**Riverbank Primary School:** Working on reducing their food waste in the school.

**Middleton Park Primary School:** Focusing on sustainability in the garden area.

**Sunnybank Primary School:** Increasing recycling and power saving.

**Kingsford Primary School:** A focus on the Sustrans project Big Walk and Wheel with 83% of activity across the school.

**Cornhill Primary School:** P3 young people have been learning about biodiversity and have shared their work at several school assemblies.

**Manor Park Primary School:** Young people have been creating a new school garden and exploring issues around litter within their surrounding area.

**Bramble Brae Primary School:** There have been presentations from local business partners on the importance of renewable energy.

**Cults Academy:** The school promoted a bottle cap competition that raised the awareness of single-use plastics and the impact that they have on the environment. A new school garden has been established and resources have been welcomed from Aberdeen for a Fairer World to support this work. Through the donated planters the school group plan to grow their own fruit, vegetables and flowers. This work will link into relevant areas of the curriculum within Science and Social Subjects in particular.

**Aberdeen Grammar School:** The school have engaged young people within a school gardens project this session.

**Fernielea Primary School:** The school Eco Group have mainly focused on litter picking within the school grounds and surrounding areas this session.

**Culter Primary School:** The school environment group have sourced planters and have started to grow plants in areas of the playground. There has also been a whole school curricular focus on global goals, food and the links to biodiversity, climate change and overall Health and Wellbeing.

## **UPDATE FROM THE YOUTH CLIMATE CHANGE GROUP**

- 3.15 In order to ensure the sustainability of our Youth Climate Change Group, applications were invited from all pupils within our Secondary Schools in May 2023 to become Aberdeen's 2<sup>nd</sup> Youth Climate Change President. These applications were reviewed by our previous Youth Climate Change President, Charlie Turner, and his Vice Presidents; as well as Central Officers. In June 2023 interviews were arranged with a number of pupils. These took place in-

person at their schools. [S5 pupil Saanvi Kumar of Cults Academy was named as the new Youth Climate Change President for Aberdeen in June.](#) Saanvi was appointed alongside four vice-presidents: Finlay Robinson (S4 Dyce Academy), Anna Thompson (S6 Cults Academy), Yujin An (S4 Cults Academy), and Vinuth Wijemanne (S4 Cults Academy) who will support Saanvi in this role for school session 23-24.

- 3.16 Saanvi has chaired monthly meetings with the group where they discuss climate change, biodiversity and Net Zero and the ideas that they wish to action for the coming year. The group's plans for this session include discussing with Primary Schools how the group can support curricular activities that support climate change and improving the environmental knowledge of young people. Arranging and supporting visits from Energy companies and schools to support Just Transition are also part of the group's plans for this session. A google classroom is also going to be created so that other young people from across the city can communicate with the group and quickly gain support. The group have also been supporting the wider work of the council, for example with recent work around how we tackle disposable vapes within our schools and communities.
- 3.17 The group has represented the voice of the young people of Aberdeen at national forums and events. These have included the national Education Scotland Learning for Sustainability group who were keen to hear about the Youth Climate Change Group.
- 3.18 The group are maintaining a clearer structure to their meetings and keeping minutes with clear actions to be undertaken before the next meeting. A Terms of Reference is in the process of being agreed by the group and this will serve as a template for the similar groups that exist within our schools. The group has established relationships with BP, NESCAN (Northeast Climate Action Network), ETZ (Energy Transition Zone), and AFW (Aberdeen for a Fairer World).
- 3.19 The Youth Climate Change group contacted all Primary and Secondary school Headteachers to introduce themselves and gain an insight into the climate change initiatives taking place in schools. They also wanted to offer their support and offered to collaborate with any scheduled activities.
- 3.20 The group has now also made direct links with every school's Eco/Climate Change group to expand the network and offer to support their future plans and initiatives. There was also the opportunity for schools to inform the group about any energy saving initiatives or environmentally conscious practices that they have already implemented. The intention is for this work already taking place in our schools to be promoted more broadly across the city so that other schools and the wider public could learn of the positive eco work that is taking place with our young people. The group are in the process of collating the feedback received and will create a plan to support these schools who have been in contact with them.
- 3.21 The group are currently working alongside Central Officers on the ABZ Pipeline project, which supports the city of Aberdeen building its future energy

workforce. The group will be involved in developing surveys and chairing pupil focus groups so that the voice of the young people of Aberdeen is part of this important project.

## **FUTURE PLANS**

- 3.22 Education, and other council clusters, will continue to support and promote the Youth Climate Change group. This will include supporting the continued collaboration on projects with external organisations.
- 3.23 Given that connections between the Youth Climate Change Group and other external organisations have only been recently established, it is proposed that the current Youth Climate Change President and Vice Presidents stay in their roles for a further twelve-months, to the end of school session 2024-2025. This will allow the group to keep working on these projects and collaborations rather than having a new team every school session.
- 3.24 Many employer-led school experiences are one-off activities with limited follow-up or measurable impact on learners. In partnership with the City Development and Regeneration Cluster, Education is launching ABZ Pipeline, which aims to map and create broad pathways into the renewables sector. The ABZ Pipeline project will create a programme of curriculum linked opportunities with employers to establish a targeted pipeline of activities across the BGE and senior phase.
- 3.25 Aberdeen for a Fairer World have developed a clear plan to support schools in Aberdeen with activities related to climate change, biodiversity, and net zero.
- 3.26 Pupils in our schools will get the chance to work with local authority officers, ETZ, and other employers to review potential projects. This initiative aims to promote cooperation and find ways for meaningful action in our communities.
- 3.27 Along with project development, the organisation plans to use existing plans to identify skills and employment opportunities that match the initiatives, helping young people to include them in their career planning strategies. This holistic approach ensures that educational activities are connected to real-world opportunities. After the in-school activities, there will be a thorough assessment of the skills gained and the impact created, allowing changes and enhancements for future engagements.
- 3.28 To record progress and share good practices, AFW aim to create a complete list of school activities carried out during Climate Week Northeast (CWNE), to be available in the summer term. Moreover, the organisation plans to involve teachers Continuing Professional Learning (CPL) sessions based on the use of their school grounds, building connections with Aberdeen City Council staff and community leaders to advance ideas for Stewart Park.
- 3.29 Engagement opportunities go beyond the classroom, with a focus on improving wider achievement and volunteering opportunities, as well as supporting National Qualifications (NQs) that are related to the outlined plans. There are aims to display the excellent work of participating schools during Climate Week

NE and beyond, acknowledging the impressive efforts and achievements of young people.

3.30 Participation in events such as film screenings, workshops, and school-based activities like Barista events and Fair-Trade initiatives, ensures ongoing involvement and motivation for further action within the school community. Through these focused efforts, AFW is dedicated to enabling schools in Aberdeen to actively participate in climate change reduction, biodiversity conservation, and the achievement of net zero goals.

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Currently there are no financial implications for this report. However, were greater oversight and consistency of approach within all Primary and Secondary Schools for areas of Climate Change, Biodiversity, and the drive towards Net Zero be recommended by the committee further central resources will be necessary. This will also be the case if the local authority is to adhere to Education Scotland's [Target 2030: A Call to Action](#).

#### 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. However, the work and activities contained in this report contribute favourably to the progress that the local authority is making towards its climate change, Net Zero, and biodiversity commitments.

#### 7. 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?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	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
<b>Compliance</b>	Risk in not engaging young people in strategic	Continuation of the monthly Pupil Group will enable us to hear directly from young people and give them a direct	L	Yes



	decision making	opportunity to shape our plans		
<b>Operational</b>	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 to their education.	L	Yes
<b>Financial</b>	No significant risks identified	N/A	N/A	Yes
<b>Reputational</b>	Risk of not achieving Net Zero	The establishment of this Pupil Group will help us better realise our plans	M	Yes
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	Risk of not achieving Net Zero	The establishment of this Pupil Group will help us better realise our plans	M	Yes

## 8. OUTCOMES

<u><a href="#">COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2023-2024</a></u>	
	<b>Impact of Report</b>
<p><b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b></p> <p><u><a href="#">Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</a></u></p>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of the following aspects of the policy statement: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners to deliver a just transition to net zero and plan to make Aberdeen a net-zero city by no later than 2037, and earlier if that is possible.</li> <li>• As we strive to achieve Net-Zero, we need to work with partners to ensure a Just Transition which is fair, both economically and socially, for the citizens of Aberdeen. The climate emergency that we face is not in dispute, and our partnership seek to work with Government, partners, the people of Aberdeen and the private sector to deliver a city that is fit for future generations.</li> </ul>
	<u><a href="#">Local Outcome Improvement Plan</a></u>
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 13 – Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate. To meet the target of Net Zero Emissions by 2045 there is a need for rapid and far-reaching change to reach this target. Continuing to support the climate change and biodiversity activities

	in our schools will support our young people being educated in this key area and ready to meet the challenges of the ongoing climate emergency.
<b>Regional and City Strategies</b>	<p><b>The National Improvement Framework</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education Authorities have a responsibility to ensure that the quality of school education, which they provide in the schools they manage, improves and do so with the aim of meeting the strategic priorities outlined in the National Improvement Framework.</li> </ul>

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	Previous Integrated Assessment relating to the <a href="#">Biodiversity Duty Report 2023</a> has been reviewed and no changes required.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required
<b>Other</b>	Not required

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

## 11. APPENDICES

None

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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