Website - UKSSN Operations Group

LinkedIn - (3) UK Schools Sustainability Network Operations Group | Groups | LinkedIn

Stories to spark conversation, fresh ideas for your climate action plan, signposts to support services, a wealth of CPD and events, and $\Rightarrow \Rightarrow \Rightarrow$ grab yourself a \bullet and enjoy \bullet .

'Sweet April showers do bring spring May flowers' (Thomas Tusser, 1557)

Stories to share this week

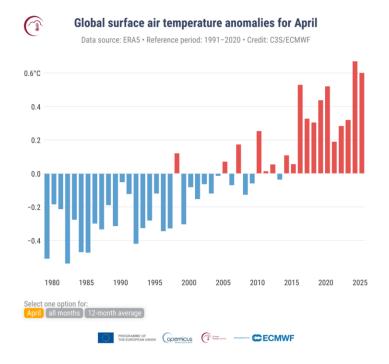
The UK is on track for its driest spring on record, with some parts of Greater London, Hampshire, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Yorkshire recording no rain in the past three weeks. Global and local data continues to show a worsening climate, with negative consequences for our schools and communities. I have a very personal interest this week...my son is sitting his GCSEs in a poorly ventilated school hall, coming home hot and tired, and needing to revise for whatever exam comes next. Christopher's GCSE results will influence what he does next; climate change may yet be a determining factor.

Heat and more extreme weather events

On 30 April, the UK MET Office published provisional figures on the meteorological conditions for the month reporting mean temperatures were the third warmest since records began in 1884.

According to the April 2025 Copernicus Climate Bulletin:

- Second-warmest April globally, 1.51°C above the 1850-1900 average.
- 21st month in the last 22 months for which the global-average surface air temperature was more than 1.5°C above the pre-industrial level.
- In Europe, temperatures were predominantly above average in April.
- Average sea surface temperature over 60°S-60°N was 20.89°C, the second-highest value on record for April.



Rivers and Drought

Many of the UK's rivers have hit exceptionally low levels and that could worsen in the next three months, according to the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH), raising questions over supplies to households, farmers and businesses.



Food Security and Farming

According to the data, parts of the Midlands and the North received less than 20% of normal rainfall, while the South experienced less than half the typical levels. This comes on the heels of an equally dry March and follows the deluge of last autumn, when unprecedented rainfall in September and October made it impossible for many farmers to drill crops. This raises the spectre of another failed harvest, following what was already the second worst on record in England last year.

Wheat haul in England estimated to be down by 21%, with Britain's wine producers also hit hard



⚠ The ECIU estimates that farmers could lose £600m on wheat, winter and spring barley, oats and oilseed rape, where production was down 15% in total. Photograph: David Bagnall/Alamy

Meanwhile the Climate Change Committee has warned that the UK isn't prepared to face the coming dangers - The country is not prepared for climate impacts, say advisors - Climate Change Committee. There is still time to act, but the clock is ticking.

Ideas for Climate Action this week

- Communication: Misinformation & Malinformation
- Climate Change Education: CAPE Alliance
- ICT: Understanding our digital carbon footprint
- Engagement: Women and Climate Action
- Finance: Catering
- Finance: Funding Opportunities
- Water: Water literacy
- **Energy:** Energy management training
- Climate Majority Project: June launch

■ Communication: Disinformation, Misinformation and Malinformation ■ Tackling climate misinformation - Met Office

Social media is driving a proliferation of climate disinformation and malinformation.

- **Disinformation** is the deliberate creation and/or sharing of false information with the intention to deceive and mislead audiences.
- The inadvertent sharing of false information is referred to as **misinformation**.
- Malinformation deliberately misleads by twisting the meaning of truthful information.

The Met Office has developed a toolkit to help tackle misinformation, to help enable individuals to form opinions from information based on peer-reviewed science, the latest climate science from their own research as well as internationally agreed science collated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

Let's all make sure we know our facts - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8USq-72MrCE&t=1s

Climate Adapted Pathways for Education (Climate Adapted Pathways for Education) is a charity that brings together researchers, educators, schools, and partners across the UK who are working to change today's education for tomorrow's climate. The CAPE team has just released the first in a new podcast series, 'Imagining Otherwise: Climate Stories for an Unwritten Future'.

This five-part series is designed to support educators in schools by bringing expert voices and diverse perspectives directly into schools. It responds to the growing need for climate change education that is high-quality, ambitious, and grounded in meaning. The podcast explores how climate change can be meaningfully woven into the curriculum, offering reflective and deep conversations that meet the demands of children and young people for thoughtful and ambitious climate change education.

Episode I: Rooted in Place – Music, Art and Climate explores how place, memory, music, and art shape the way we relate to climate change.

- YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i211HDLlxl8
- Spotify: https://open.spotify.com/episode/0nCJAC7jlvDBUxm9XU265C?si=C6dd4a
 O6RDajlszuliGGhg
- CAPE Website: https://www.capealliance.org.uk/podcast/episodel

Plus: Climate Wise Programme

The CAPE Alliance - <u>Climate Adapted Pathways for Education</u> - CPD programme for school and subject leaders is open for applications. 'Climate Wise Schools' is designed to support you with the knowledge and skills necessary to deliver high-quality, evidence-informed, Climate Change Education in your school or Trust. Highly recommended, see the attached documents for more information.

■ ICT: Understanding our digital carbon footprint

Your school's digital carbon footprint increases with every email sent, every file saved, every Teams video call, every ChatGPT / Copilot enquiry...the list goes on. Plus, our personal social use and streaming is an ever-accelerating avalanche. The environmental impact of our 'digital footprint' mostly flies under the radar and is difficult to measure, while having hidden impact every day. What do we do? Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- 1. Data Storage Use cloud storage providers with green data centres. Regularly delete redundant files. Promote digital decluttering to reduce energy use from unnecessary data retention.
- 2. Procurement of Devices Choose energy-efficient, durable devices bought from suppliers with strong eco-credentials. Prioritize repairable and upgradable hardware to extend lifespan and reduce e-waste. Value Match has supported my Trust with this part of our climate action plan (Value Match | Purpose led procurement solutions delivered with integrity).
- 3. Energy Management Implement smart energy systems to monitor and optimize electricity use. Power down devices when not in use and use energy-saving settings across all equipment.
- 4. Use of AI AI carbon emissions have reached alarming levels, with just ChatGPT generating over 260,000 kg of CO2 monthly, raising urgent questions about artificial intelligence's environmental sustainability (<u>ChatGPT's monthly carbon footprint equivalent to 260 transatlantic flights</u>). Yet almost a third of UK engineers, architects and city planners now use artificial intelligence (AI) tools daily, with many applying

them to tackle climate and environmental challenges, according to a new global survey. Microsoft recently published new research detailing how alternative cooling technologies could significantly reduce the environmental impact of data centres, particularly those used to power artificial intelligence (AI) systems. As use of AI accelerates - and it will - we need to focus on limiting non-essential AI use. Consider lightweight AI models, and schedule intensive tasks during off-peak hours to reduce energy demand and emissions.

5. Digital Education - Educate colleagues and students on digital sustainability. Promote responsible tech use, such as reducing video streaming quality and turning off unused apps and tabs.

Couch to Carbon is running a 'lunch and learn' all about the hidden impact of our digital habits. There is a cost, but I expect the training will be high quality - Couch to Carbon Zero — Lunch & Learn.

We are early in our understanding of the benefit and costs of expanding digital technology and infrastructure in our schools. As much as we need to be hyper-vigilant to the safeguarding and mental health impact of technology, we need to be conscious of the impact it has on our planet and not ignore the issue because we cannot see it.

Engagement: Women in Climate Action

Climate change is a 'wicked' problem. Understanding why groups of people might be motivated to act is an important aspect of climate action planning.

The data is clear: "across every country, love for the next generation is the dominant reason for action on climate change." And when we look at who is particularly in support, mums rise to the top. In a recent U.S. survey -

- 81% of mothers surveyed are worried about climate change.
- 93% agreed with the statement that "we have a moral responsibility to create a safe and healthy climate for ourselves and our children."
- Women in general are more likely to list climate and environment issues as a top voting priority

Sadly, climate change is already harming mothers and children in many ways:

- **Conception:** Heat stress can disrupt the menstrual cycle and lower sperm quality, making it more difficult to get pregnant. A study in China found that a moderate increase in air pollution reduced fertility rates by 20%.
- **Miscarriage:** Exposure to dirty air increases the risk of miscarriages by more than 10%. For those using IVF, the risks are even greater. An Australian study found that air pollution can reduce the likelihood of a live birth by nearly 40%.

- **Mental health:** A California study found that postpartum depression was much more common among mothers who were exposed to greater heat and air pollution, and who didn't have access to green space.
- Infants and young children are particularly vulnerable to heat stress and more likely to
 be harmed by climate-related disasters. A new study Will you live an unprecedented life? calculates that hundreds of millions of children will be exposed to unprecedented climate
 extremes as the world warms.
- **Women** in the developing world are also disproportionately affected by climate change in many other ways, whether through increased child marriages, displacement, and famine.

(Ref. Katharine Hayhoe)

Perhaps the disproportionate impact on women is a reason for patterns appearing in our education system, whereby women are often leading the sustainability agenda, women dominate sustainability roles, schools and Trusts led by women are often driving the climate action narrative, and climate action support services are commonly led by women?

I was asked yesterday how we can influence change. Part of the answer is getting to know our audience and understanding their motivations. Here are two particularly helpful places to start:

- ♥ Edurio Climate and Environmental Action Survey Edurio
- ♥ Global Equality Collective The Technology Global Equality Collective

On the subject of women and Climate Action....Eunice Foote

American scientist Eunice Foote, an amateur physicist and inventor born 200 years ago, conducted pioneering experiments that predicted the discovery of the greenhouse effect. In her work, she compared the temperatures inside glass cylinders filled with various gases and found that both water vapor and "carbonic acid gas" (now known as carbon dioxide) significantly increased the internal temperature when exposed to sunlight. Foote hypothesized that if the Earth's atmosphere had contained higher levels of carbon dioxide in the past, the planet would have been considerably warmer—an insight remarkably ahead of its time.



Born on July 17, 1819, Eunice Newton Foote was an amateur scientist and a women's rights campaigner who was friends with American suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Foote's experiments with atmospheric gases and her insights about past climate were overlooked for more than a century. Drawing by Carlyn Iverson, NOAA Climate.gov.

Despite the significance of her findings, Foote did not present her research herself at the 1856 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Instead, her paper was read aloud by a male colleague, reflecting the gender barriers faced by women in science during that era.



Price of butter, chocolate, coffee and potatoes soars - and costs will go higher



Price of butter, chocolate, coffee and potatoes are soaring - and costs will go higher. Higher national insurance contributions, poor harvests, and new levies on food packaging have been blamed for helping to increase prices

A new survey by APSE ($\frac{\text{Home - apse}}{\text{on the state of local authority catering services has found that the average price paid for a primary school meal is now £2.63, an increase from £2.40 in 2023, while the average price for a secondary school meal is now £2.79, up from £2.29 in 2023. APSE says this reflects the rising cost of provision, with councils unable to subsidise the service due to financial pressures. The two most popular reported measures to mitigate price rises were:$

- Working with supplier with 88.87% of respondents engaging in this practice.
- 'Meat-free days' was the second most popular measure at 64.52%, a significant increase from 22.73% in 2023. APSE reported this as a cost reduction measure, but it could also be in response to the catering services' commitment to being more sustainable and the changes to UK diets. A survey carried out by the Vegan Society reported in January 2025 over 3% of the UK population self-identify as vegetarian or vegan and 10% are eliminating or otherwise reducing animal product consumption.

Schools and Trusts will likely be looking at both of the above options to ensure they can continue to provide healthy, nutritious, lunch offerings to children and young people. Proveg (Home - ProVeg UK) are a great support in reducing meat and other costly (and damaging) ingredients from the school menu. At next week's UKSSN network meeting (22nd May at 16.00, Teams) we will hear from Shropshire Good Food Partnership (Shropshire good food | Shropshire Good Food Partnership | England) on the work they have been doing to support schools and communities create a resilient local food system that is 'good for people, place and planet'.

An effective catering procurement strategy can have benefits for people, planet, and the precious pounds in our bank accounts.

i Finance: Funding opportunities i

APSE Energy also produces a regular funding update (see attached pdf). Whilst not every opportunity will be relevant, there are grants available for schools and Trusts that might help accelerate climate and biodivesity action in your setting.

🔭 Grounds Management: No Mow May, June, July.... 🔭

Please don't forget about 'No Mow May' - <u>Plantlife's No Mow May</u> <u>Movement</u>. Approximately 97% of flower-rich meadows have been

Movement. Approximately 97% of flower-rich meadows have been lost since the 1930s, and with them, vital food and habitat needed by wildlife. No Mow May is Plantlife's annual campaign urging everyone to pack away the lawnmower, let wildflowers grow freely and help nature. Whether you're in a city, town or the countryside, it's super easy to take part. No lawn is too small! Even the smallest wild patch can provide vital food needed by bees and butterflies, connecting us with nature and giving nature the best start to summer.

Waterwise: Water Literacy

With growing pressure on water supplies, learn more about why water management is a critical part of an effective Climate Action Plan: <u>Water Literacy | Accredited Learning Experience</u>

◆ Energy: Zenergi Energy Management training ◆

https://zenergi.co.uk/news/sustainability-lead-training-an-introduction-to-energy-and-carbon-management/

This Level I workshop is accredited by the Institute of School Business Leaders and will equip Sustainability Leads with the practical tools and insights needed to take control of energy management in their school or MAT. Training will be taking place:

- 25th June The Studio Leeds, Riverside West, Whitehall Road, Leeds, LS1 4AW 9am-2pm
- IIth September The Studio Birmingham, 7 Cannon Street, Birmingham, B2 5EP (5) 9am-2pm
- 23rd October ISH Venues, One Park Crescent, International Students House, 229
 Great Portland Street, WIW 5PN 9am-2pm

(For a limited time only there are free tickets available for the Leeds event - email Helen.burge@buoyantimpact.co.uk for your code).

Zenergi has also produced an 'Energy walkaround checklist', free to download here: Zenergi walkaround checklist New.pdf

Climate Majority Project: Climate Courage Schools

<u>Select tickets – Climate Courage Schools: launch – Zoom</u>

Education needs to take the emotional impact of climate change seriously. But this is a hard message to get through when Climate Change Education is in its infancy and the increase in young people struggling with their mental health. The Climate Courage Schools is a campaign to ensure all young people gain the practical, emotional, and cognitive skills needed to "adapt and thrive in the world and workplace of the future", as pledged by the Department for Education. The launch event (link above) is Wed 25 Jun 2025, 4.30-6pm.



🎽 Support Services: Where to turn for help 🎽



Sustainability Support Hub - Action for Climate by Sustainability Support for **Education**

Sustainability Support for Education are holding more Action for Climate webinars throughout May and June.

- Identify key actions for your plan
- Engage the right colleagues
- Access expert resources for successful implementation

Natonal Education Nature Park - Home | Education Nature Park

Join the National Education Nature Park and explore the habitats in your school, nursery or college site. Whether you're new to the programme or already involved, exploring local habitats is a fantastic way for students to connect with nature, develop essential skills and dive into real scientific research. Register today and kickstart your adventure with our Habitat Heroes activity. Already involved? Time to map your site! Create a baseline for improving your outdoor spaces and track the difference you're making for both people and wildlife.

Let's Go Zero - Climate Action Advisors - Lets Go Zero

One simple step we can all take is to sign up and engage you local (& free!) LGZ Climate Advisor. Let's Go Zero are also offering Carbon Literacy courses, a key part of your CPD plan for climate action -

Carbon Literacy - Free Carbon Literacy training from Let's Go Zero

The Carbon Literacy Project 2024 Impact Report has been published - 2024-Impactreport.pdf (page 16 for Education)

"Carbon Literacy training is hard hitting and effective at highlighting the challenges we face due to climate change and thinking about the actions we can take as an organisation and as individuals to tackle it. Rolling out this training to staff demonstrates the council's commitment to ensuring climate change is something that is seriously considered in every department and at

Councillor John Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport, Reading Borough Council



Change Agents UK also runs regular Carbon Literacy courses, a crucial step in everyone's Climate Action Plan - Change Agents UK Events - 7 Upcoming Activities and Tickets | Eventbrite

Climate Ambassadors - Contact us & get involved | Climate Ambassadors

The Minister for Early Years, Stephen Morgan MP, who leads on sustainability at the Department for Education, has become the UK's 1,000th Climate Ambassador 2. Minister Morgan said: "The Climate Ambassadors programme is a vital part of our strategy to

empower schools and educators in tackling the climate crisis, and I'm proud to be joining over 1,000 volunteers to support schools in developing and delivering their climate action plans."

Count Your Carbon - Home - Count Your Carbon

Count Your Carbon is the nation's first free, full-scope carbon emissions calculator, built for – and in collaboration with – nurseries, schools and colleges.

It supports educational settings to calculate, understand, reduce and track your carbon emissions.

PLUS:

Blue Marble (New) - <u>Sustainable schools & trusts - start today with a Climate</u> Action Plan - Blue Marble

Blue Marble recently released a new Climate Action Plan tool for schools. According to their website the CAP tool is free for schools, designed to quickly and easily create a plan that unlocks meaningful action.

Greener Schools Index - Greener Schools Index

The GSI is a free tool self-assessment tool designed to support all schools, however big or small, and at whatever stage they are on their net zero journey. The second phase of GSI is now open and will help you assess your current level of climate action and identify areas for further development. Give it a try...it is free and a particularly useful planning tool.

Salix - Salix Finance - Salixfinance.co.uk

Since its formation in 2004 up to 31 March 2023, Salix has helped public sector organisations commit to more than 22,000 projects by administering £3.3 billion of funding, with projects saving 1.1 million tonnes of carbon dioxide annually.

The CPD and Events

There is a multitude of CPD, training and networking opportunities between now and the summer break to support climate and biodiversity action in education. Below are just some of the highlights.

Thoughtbox - Transforming Leadership (June 2025)

<u>Leadership Application — ThoughtBox Education</u>

The Transforming Leadership Programme is a four-week (4x 2 hour) online course for education leaders to delve into the roots of our nested crises and explore our role in enabling healthier futures. This nature-led leadership programme is designed to support you to grow resilience as a leader and strengthen practical experience alongside a community of peers on a journey of transformation, together.



Weds 4th June, Thurs 12th June, Thurs 19th June, Thurs 26th June, 4 - 6pm BST

WUKSSN Network Meeting - 22nd May, 16.00 on TEAMS

UKSSN Operations Group

Following the introduction of new recycling regulations at the end of March, our focus will be on waste management. We will be joined by Devon County Council who have a long-established waste management programme for schools and the Shropshire Good Food Partnership to talk about their work with schools and strategies to reduce food waste.

Register for the meeting on our website (link above $\stackrel{\smile}{\circ}$)

Reading Climate Festival (University of Reading) - Climate Action Planning - I7th June, I5.00-I8.30 📆

https://tinyurl.com/ycrk9nf3

As part of Reading Climate Festival, the Climate Ambassadors scheme will be running a fully funded Climate Action Planning event for education settings in and around Reading. Climate Ambassadors is a programme supporting the UK Government's ambition for all education settings to have a climate action plan in place by the end of 2025. During the day, you will be provided with information on climate action plans, hear from education settings in Reading

who are progressing well on their sustainability journey, get support in developing actions for your climate action plan and direction to programmes and resources to help you with climate action planning.

😚 Reimagine Places & Spaces - 3rd July, 08.30 to 16.30 😚

Reimagine Places & Spaces: The Future of Modern Workplace

GovNews is at the forefront of shaping the future of public sector workplaces. Join us for an exclusive conference showcasing the trailblazing winners and finalists from 2024 industry awards, as they reveal how they are redefining workspaces, estates, and facilities to drive efficiency, collaboration, and sustainability. This Public Sector conference day will host 150 in-person delegates, complemented by a broader online audience tailored to the specific agenda themes.

Plus...

Here are a just a few more events to look forward to over the summer term:

- Schools Sustainability Showcase, ARU Peterborough (22nd May 2025)
- ASCL Annual Sustainability Conference, Manchester (5th June 2025)
- DSLS Climate and Nature in Education, Exeter (5th Jun 2025) email office@devonsls.co.uk
- **North Hampshire** Climate Action Planning in Education Workshop- Monday 23rd June 9:30am 12pm, The Hurst School, Baughurst, Tadley, RG26 5NL-Registration form: Hampshire's Climate Action Planning in Education Workshop
- South Hampshire Climate Action Planning in Education Workshop- Wednesday 25th June 9:30am – 12pm Park Community School, Havant, PO9 4BU- Registration form: Hampshire's Climate Action Planning in Education Workshop
- London Schools Eco-Network 2025, Highgate School (25th June 2025)
- North-West <u>Sustainability Learning Conference</u> (26th June 2025)
- Northern Sustainability Summit, Manchester, (10th July 2025), all sectors



"The response to climate change and embedding changes into school and college life is a priority for many this year. The ASCL Sustainability Conference is returning and is taking place in Manchester on Thursday 5 June 2025. We are thrilled to announce Award Winning Engineer, Global Innovation and Sustainability Consultant, Yewande Akinola, as a keynote speaker. You will have the opportunity

to attend some great workshop sessions for you to get practical takeaways to consider for your setting, and there will be a wonderful session delivered by students too! The full programme is now live on the website."

If you are planning an event let us know and we will share with colleagues in the network.



Going bananas report - Christian Aid

The climate crisis is threatening the future of the world's most popular fruit (and my favourite), as almost two-thirds of banana-growing areas in Latin America and the Caribbean may no longer be suitable for growing the fruit by 2080, new research has found. Bananas are the world's most consumed fruit – and the fourth most important food crop globally. From an environmental perspective, they are also a fantastic component of a low-carbon diet -

- Grown in natural sunlight so no hothousing is needed
- They keep well they might be grown thousands of miles away but they are transported by boat (which is about 1% of the carbon footprint of airfreight).
- They provide their own packaging
- A fairtrade version is readily available

Extract from 'How Bad Are Bananas', Mike Berners-Lee

Rising temperatures, extreme weather and climate-related pests are impacting banana-growing countries such as Guatemala, Costa Rica and Colombia (the source of 80% of global bananas), reducing yields and devastating rural communities. Lack of genetic variation that makes bananas particularly vulnerable to the rapidly changing climate.

"Bananas are not just the world's favourite fruit, they are also an essential food for millions of people. We need to wake up to the danger posed by climate change," said Osai Ojigho, Christian Aid's director of policy and campaigns. "The lives and livelihoods of people who have done nothing to cause the climate crisis are already under threat."

Have a great weekend 💙

Other recommended sources of advice and support

- DfE sustainability hub: <u>Sustainability Support for Education</u> (with updated features for 2025 and updates in <u>LinkedIn</u>
- 2. UKSSN: <u>UKSSN Operations Group</u>
- 3. Education Nature Park: Home | Education Nature Park
- 4. Climate Ambassadors: Climate Ambassadors: Turning Climate Ambition into Climate Action in Education | Climate Ambassadors
- 5. Let's Go Zero: UK Climate Change Let's Go Zero
- 6. EAUC: <u>The Platform Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges, EAUC United Kingdom</u>
- 7. FED: FED | Climate Change

- 8. Good Estate Management for Schools Good estate management for schools Guidance GOV.UK
- 9. Sustainable Drainage (SUDS) Susdrain The community for sustainable drainage
- 10. The Trust Network (TTN) <u>The Trust Network supporting good school estates & facilities management</u>
- II. Salix Project delivery: support and guidance
- 12. Count Your Carbon (Eco Schools) Home Count Your Carbon

Other useful references

HM Government Net Zero Strategy (October 2021, page 29)

'Government is leading the way – embedding climate into our policy and spending decisions, increasing the transparency of our progress on climate goals, and providing funding to drive ambitious emissions reductions in schools and hospitals.'

 $\underline{https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6194dfa4d3bf7f0555071b1b/net-zero-strategy-beis.pdf}\\$

Department for Education Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy (April 2022)

Sustainability and climate change strategy - GOV.UK

Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR)

Environmental reporting guidelines: including Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting requirements - GOV.UK