

# Sustainable Schools



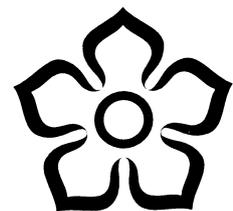
# LEICESTER

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## So your school wants to declare a **Climate Emergency?**

A practical guide for Colleges, Schools  
and Multi Academy Trusts

[schools.leicester.gov.uk/climate-emergency](https://schools.leicester.gov.uk/climate-emergency)



Leicester  
City Council

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## How to use this guide

1. Read through this guide to understand what the Climate Emergency is
2. Discuss your plans with students and staff
3. Select actions which you plan to achieve, make them manageable but also remember we are in a Climate Emergency.
4. Make sure your actions have a duration, responsibilities and an evaluation
5. Take your action plan to the Governing Body or Trustees to ensure that you have their support.
6. You can submit your action plan to the City Council which we will publicise as part of our wider action plan.
7. Start your action plan!
8. Review regularly to check and maintain your progress

Support is available from the Environmental Education Team in developing your plan and carrying out the actions.

**Marc Tench**  
**Sustainable Schools manager**  
[Marc.Tench@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Marc.Tench@leicester.gov.uk)  
0116 454 6746

**Molly Laycock**  
**Project Officer**  
[Molly.Laycock@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Molly.Laycock@leicester.gov.uk)  
0116 454 3187

General email: [environmentaleducationleicester@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:environmentaleducationleicester@leicester.gov.uk)

# Introduction

## What the Council has done?

On 1 February 2019 Leicester City Council declared a Climate Emergency. The declaration is an acknowledgement that:

- climate change is happening, and threatens the wellbeing of everyone in Leicester and worldwide
- the speed and scale of global and local action to tackle the problem needs to be dramatically increased.

In its declaration, the Council committed to developing a new action plan to address the emergency through our own services and projects – to follow on from our recently-completed Sustainability Action Plan. We also want to inspire others to join us and take action too.

## What is a climate emergency?

Scientists now agree that the climate is changing as a result of human activity. Global average temperatures have increased by 1°C from pre-industrial levels and sea levels are rising.

World leaders have set a target in what's known as the Paris Agreement to stop the temperature increase from going beyond 1.5°C. This is what scientists believe is needed to prevent catastrophic impacts.

It will require major changes over the next decade and beyond to stop temperature rise going past this limit. It has become clear that the speed and scale of change will need to be much greater than anything that's been done so far to tackle climate change.

Many people think that if humanity doesn't act decisively now, climate change could threaten the lives of many millions of people as well as much of the world's wildlife. This is why the term 'climate emergency' is now used.

In Leicester, the City Council took the decision to declare a Climate Emergency for several reasons.

- We believe that climate change poses a very great threat to the wellbeing of present and future residents of the city, and to Leicester's future success and prosperity.
- Cities including our own have been estimated to be responsible for about 70% of worldwide carbon dioxide emissions. We believe that the Council and the rest of the city has a responsibility to play our part in tackling the challenge.
- Leicester has a lot to gain from acting decisively now, rather than waiting for other cities and other countries to act first. For example, many of the clean technologies required will make the city a healthier place to live. By adopting them as soon as we

can, we think this could help our economy get a head-start in the new emerging low-carbon economic sectors, and the jobs being created in them.

- This could be the last opportunity to put the world on the right path in a planned and manageable way, rather than in a chaotic way which risks causing negative impacts – particularly on the more vulnerable members of society. We think Leicester should plan for change now, not wait for outside events to force change upon us.

## **Why is this important?**

Records show that global average temperatures have increased by around 1°C from pre-industrial levels already. Sea levels around the UK have risen by an average of 16cm since 1900 and they will continue to rise for centuries, even if we stop creating carbon emissions, due to time lags in the climate system.

For central England, the Met Office is predicting that average summer temperatures could rise by between 1.1 and 5.8°C by 2070 compared to the period 1981-2000 in a ‘high emissions scenario’. Hotter summers are expected to become more common, with the chance of seeing temperatures similar to the 2018 heatwave increasing to around 50% by mid-century.

Summers could become drier and winters wetter on average, but with increasing variability. This means that Leicester and the surrounding area will need to cope with more frequent intense rainfall, and also prolonged dry periods.

Amongst the implications of these changes for Leicester:

- More frequent and severe heatwaves could present a risk to health. Children, older people and those with a pre-existing health condition tend to be more vulnerable.
- The risk of overheating and the need for, and expense of, air conditioning in buildings could increase if steps are not taken to adapt them. Public spaces could also be at risk – particularly those with little or no shade or vegetation in the most built-up areas.
- Key infrastructure can also be at risk during heatwaves.
- With more frequent intense rainfall, the city’s drains and rivers are expected to come under greater pressure. Steps are already being taken to deal with these pressures in the River Soar corridor and elsewhere. Measures to slow rainwater run-off or disperse it in other ways will also be needed.
- While central England is not expected to be as severely affected by drought as the south-east, there will still be a greater need to conserve mains water to avoid the eventual need for new reservoir capacity.

Globally, sea level rise will increasingly threaten the safety of many millions of people living in lower-lying coastal areas. Changes in weather patterns will affect the productivity and even viability of farmland in some areas, threatening food production.

At the same time, biodiversity is already being affected over large areas and this will intensify. While some species may benefit from changes, a lot more are expected to be threatened by them. Many could be unable to respond quickly enough – resulting in potentially large-scale population reductions and extinctions.

The exact impact of these changes on Leicester are not known, but what we can say is that the city's future is bound up with that of the rest of the world in almost every aspect of life. Through the goods we import, family links between continents and in countless other ways, local interests and global interests are the same.

## **What does declaring a climate emergency mean?**

Declaring a climate emergency means the school or trust acknowledges:

- Climate change is happening and threatens the wellbeing of everyone in Leicester and worldwide.
- The speed and scale of global and local action to tackle the problem needs to be dramatically increased.

It means that the governors or trustees:

- Formally make a declaration which appears on their website and can be submitted and shared with the city council.
- Instruct the leadership team/s to work together with students, staff and the communities on a shared mission that matters to us all – combatting climate change.
- We will report on our action plan and report back to the governing body/trust board on an annual basis from the date of the declaration.

# List of potential actions for your school

## The Curriculum

- Identify and develop opportunities to learn about climate change across all subject areas
- Introduce project-based learning to develop education for sustainability as a cross-curricular priority
- Participate in carbon literacy training <https://carbonliteracy.com/> (currently offered free to staff and students by Leicester City Council) or the online UN Climate Change Learn programme <https://unccelearn.org/educate/>
- Create a climate change and climate justice section in your library (a reading list can be provided)

## Participation

- Set up a climate committee – *could* be your Eco-Schools team (consisting of students, staff, parents and members of the local community) to identify what your school can do
- Encourage individual staff to act on the climate emergency, for example through staff incentive schemes and behaviour change programmes
- Contact local MPs/Central Government to raise your concerns
- Promote “How to talk to your child about climate change” and “How to talk to your parents about climate change” leaflets
- Participate in the city wide ‘Climate Change’ week for schools – date to be confirmed

## Food

- Meat free days e.g. the Vegetarian Society’s ‘Meat free Mondays’
- Develop more vegetarian and vegan options
- Participate in the Food for Life Programme – which encourages - buying local, organic food which is in season to reduce food miles
- Monitor and make changes to reduce food waste in the dining room and staff room
- Compost food waste

## Transport

- Participate in projects with Sustrans and Living Streets to increase walking and cycling by students, staff and families

- Where cycling and walking are not possible, use public transport or car sharing
- Increase infrastructure for cycle storage and electric charging points
- Avoid school trips that involve flying
- Review your travel plan to include deliveries and business travel

## Resources

- Use renewable, sustainable resources in purchasing
- Develop ways to reduce paper such as email, texting and monitoring printing systems
- Ban single-use plastics
- Reduce water consumption
- Review your school purchasing policy to include:
  - Buy environmentally friendly, fairly traded products where possible
  - Use biodegradable cleaning materials
  - Climate friendly products to create more consumer demand
  - Highlighting the impact of what we buy

## Energy

- Insulate, monitor and manage your buildings
- Switch to a green energy tariff – ESPO are able to offer a green electrical tariff mid-contract
- Create a whole school policy which includes switching off lights and equipment, turning down the heating and wear thicker clothes (we can provide example policies)
- Install renewable energy e.g. solar panels and solar thermal
- Apply for DfE backed Salix funding to develop these projects through interest free loans

## Clothing

- Avoid cheap uniforms imported from developing countries
- Encourage suppliers to use natural and sustainable fibres
- Run a second-hand uniform shop
- Buy school uniform made from recycled materials
- Encourage a reduction in fast fashion for non-uniform days e.g. Christmas jumper day
- Run clothes recycling schemes in school or host a recycling container for example the LOROS Reuse shop

## School grounds

- Grow your own fruit and vegetables
- Teach children how to garden
- Improve climate change mitigation by planting trees in school and in partnership with other land owners and the council

## Waste

- Change buying habits to produce less waste. Buy items that will last longer, have less packaging and can be easily reused or recycled, take this into account in your purchasing policy
- Donate or sell, instead of throwing away. Gadgets, appliances, clothes and other things could be repaired instead of buying new things.
- Make sure that as much of their waste as possible is recycled through your waste collection, typically:
  - Plastic, metals (cans and foil), cards and paper
  - WEEE collections
  - Participate in other specific schemes such as pens, crisp packets, batteries, shoes and clothes, toner cartridges

# Climate Emergency - action plan

School name – Date

Insert  
school  
logo here

Action	Duration	Responsibility	Evaluation

# Declaration of Climate Emergency

Insert  
school  
logo here

Date of decision:

(*School name*) formally declares a climate emergency for our school/Multi-Academy Trust\*.

We have taken this action because:

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We intend to work together with students, staff and the communities on a shared mission that matters to us all.

We will address this state of emergency by developing a list of actions that we will take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for a changing climate:

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We will report on our action plan and report back to the governing body/trust board on an annual basis from the date of this declaration.

We take this declaration of action with the support of our Governors/  
Trustees\* and Headteacher/Principal/CEO\*

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Chair of Governors/Trustees\*

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Headteacher/Principal/CEO\*

# Local support for the climate emergency

Updated January 2024



## Energy

**Marc Tench – behaviour change, student/staff development practical approaches**  
Environmental Team, Leicester City Council  
Tel: 0116 454 6746  
[Marc.Tench@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Marc.Tench@leicester.gov.uk)



## Transport

**Cate Dearn – Living Streets**  
[Cate.Dearn@livingstreets.org.uk](mailto:Cate.Dearn@livingstreets.org.uk)

**Amy Everett – Sustrans and cycling**  
Schools cycling Officer, Sustrans  
[Amy.Everett@sustrans.org.uk](mailto:Amy.Everett@sustrans.org.uk)

**Colin Cheney – Bikeability**  
Leicester City Council  
Tel: 0116 454 2821  
[Colin.Cheney@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Colin.Cheney@leicester.gov.uk)



## Waste

**Kimberley Tilley – waste and recycling**  
Waste Management, Leicester City Council  
[Kimberley.tilley@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Kimberley.tilley@leicester.gov.uk)  
Tel: 0116 454 6742

**Teej Patel – recycling schemes including pens and crisp packets**  
COG Youth Services  
[info@cogyouthservices.co.uk](mailto:info@cogyouthservices.co.uk)

**Ken Dunn – Happy Shoes, shoe recycling scheme**  
Africa's Gift  
[kdunn@ccw ltd.org](mailto:kdunn@ccw ltd.org)  
Tel: 01709 717111



## Global learning & citizenship

**Sarah Shephard – Fairtrade resources and products**

Just Fairtrade  
[askjust@justfairtrade.com](mailto:askjust@justfairtrade.com)  
Tel: 0116 253 8032



## Water

**Phil Pearce – saving water in schools and at home**  
Severn Trent Water  
[Philip.Pearce@severntrent.co.uk](mailto:Philip.Pearce@severntrent.co.uk)  
Tel: 07703718340

**Roshni Jose – flood risk, yellow fish campaign, water pollution**  
Flood Risk, Leicester City Council  
[Roshni.Jose@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Roshni.Jose@leicester.gov.uk)



## School grounds and biodiversity

**Donna Oxbrough – technical advice on biodiversity**  
Nature Conservation Officer, Leicester City Council  
[Donna.Oxbrough@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Donna.Oxbrough@leicester.gov.uk)  
Tel: 0116 454 0139

**Bethan Painter – outdoor learning, forest schools and tree planting**  
Enstruct (formerly Environmental Studies)  
01162 895454  
[Bethan@enstructtraining.co.uk](mailto:Bethan@enstructtraining.co.uk)

**Sally Ikingill – free tree planting in schools and community**  
Project Officer – Trees for Schools, Woodland Trust  
Tel: 0343 7705503  
Mobile: 07443779908  
[SallyIkingill@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:SallyIkingill@woodlandtrust.org.uk)



## Healthy Living

**Danni Kennell**  
Air Quality Education  
Leicester City Council  
Tel: 0116 454 0166  
[Danielle.kennell@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Danielle.kennell@leicester.gov.uk)

**Annual Grow your own grub and sunflower competitions**  
Leicester City Council  
Tel: 0116 454 3187  
[GrowYourOwnGrub@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:GrowYourOwnGrub@leicester.gov.uk)

**Julie Brookes– Young chef of the year competition**

Leicester City Council

Tel: 0116 4545061

[Dawn.brookes@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Dawn.brookes@leicester.gov.uk)



**Marine**

**Roshni Jose – flood risk, water pollution**

Flood Risk, Leicester City Council

[Roshni.Jose@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Roshni.Jose@leicester.gov.uk)

**Nicola Holt – Leicester Environmental Volunteers**

**– plastic pollution, rivers clean up**

Parks Team, Leicester City Council

Tel: 0116 454 2232

[LEV@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:LEV@leicester.gov.uk)

**Canal and River Trust**

**Adrian Royston – Skills and Learning Coordinator**

Tel: 01636 704481

[adrian.royston@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:adrian.royston@canalrivertrust.org.uk)