

Exploring Climate Change

Take action

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Scotland, like many other developed countries, is using an unfair and unsustainable share of the world's resources, such as energy and food. If everyone on Earth used resources at the same rate we do in Scotland we'd need far more than our planet could provide.

Every time we get in the car, turn on a light, buy our groceries or go on holiday, we make our mark. The challenge that faces us, is how can we all enjoy a high quality of life without spoiling our world for future generations?

Whether at home, at work, at leisure or at school, we can all help to reduce our impact on the planet by taking some simple steps to use less resources.

'This is a global problem requiring a global solution, but we can all help to make a difference. If we reduce the amount of energy we use and make our energy consumption more efficient, we will reduce the impact that we, as individuals, have on the environment'.

Professor Sir David King, Chief Scientific Advisor to the UK Government.



Photo credit (Buchanan Street): Scotland's Climate Change Programme. Image freely available for educational use in Scotland

Global citizens

'Climate change is forcing vulnerable communities in poor countries to adapt to unprecedented climate stress. Rich countries, primarily responsible for creating the problem, must stop harming... and start helping, by providing finance for adaptation.'

Oxfam briefing paper, 'Adapting to climate change'

How do you define yourself? You are part of your family, your generation, your school and your local community. You live in Scotland - a rich industrialised country, part of the developed world. You share Planet Earth with over 6 billion people. You are part of the global community - a global citizen.

Oxfam¹ sees a global citizen as someone who:

- is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their own role as a world citizen
- respects and values diversity
- has an understanding of how the world works economically, politically, socially, culturally, technologically and environmentally
- is outraged by social injustice
- participates in and contributes to the community at a range of levels from local to global
- is willing to act to make the world a more sustainable place
- takes responsibility for their actions.

As responsible global citizens we have to try to make informed choices and decisions. It is important to evaluate environmental, scientific and technological issues, and develop informed, ethical views of complex global issues.

Your voice is important. You have the right to speak out, to be counted, and to tell politicians and businesses what you think.

- How do you feel our politicians have responded to global warming?
- What could the Scottish Government do to reduce Scotland's impact on Planet Earth?
- Do you think that local authorities, councils and businesses in Scotland could do more?

You can act to make your voice heard in your school, your local community and globally.

¹ <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/>

Act locally



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There are many ways to make a difference and help fight climate change.

Talk to your local authority

Local authorities have the potential to play a key role in tackling climate change through both their own activities and their influence on the wider community.

Your local authority, in common with all local authorities in Scotland, has signed Scotland's Climate Change Declaration² committing them to working together with the Scottish Government and their local communities to address climate change.

Local councillors and council officers will welcome your involvement. Enter into a dialogue, talk about how you can each help one another tackle global warming, and invite speakers from your local authority to your school. Think about what actions are practical and ask for assistance.

How good is your local authority's record on climate change action?

As part of Scotland's Climate Change Declaration, local authorities committed to prepare a plan, with targets and timescales, on how they would achieve a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from their own operations including energy use, transport and waste. They are also to publish an annual statement on their progress in addressing climate change.

Learn more about Scotland's Zero Waste Plan launched in 2010:

<http://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/>

Recycling and composting

Scotland has been traditionally reliant on landfill to dispose of its waste. We now understand that we must seek out more sustainable options, such as: reducing the amount of waste generated, reusing, recycling and composting the waste we do produce.

To help achieve this the Scottish Government has provided funding to local authorities to help develop recycling and composting facilities. Local authorities have in turn been set targets including:

- 25% recycling/composting of municipal waste by 2006 (and 30% recycling/composting of municipal waste by 2008)

² <http://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/sustainability-climate-change/sustainable-scotland-network>

- 55% recycling/composting of municipal waste (35% recycling and 20% composting) by 2020.

Information on recycling rates for each of Scotland's local authorities can be found on the Scottish Environment Protection Agency's (SEPA's) website:

<https://www.sepa.org.uk/environment/waste/waste-data/waste-data-reporting/>

Challenge your local supermarkets

What shops and supermarkets are there in your area? List the shops, size, type of provision and car parking space, delivery services, existence of recycling facilities, etc. Investigate supermarket chains' websites and find out what each has to say on the environment and green shopping. What are their current and future plans to reduce their carbon footprint? Are the supermarket's green shopping initiatives really making a difference or are they just trying to sell you a greener image?

Each supermarket chain will have an Environmental Policy and more than likely a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) report detailing how they are reducing their environmental impact. Look at what is happening locally - are these 'central promises' being delivered by the stores in your area?

What are supermarkets promising to do and what are they actually doing? Ask the managers of your local stores directly what they are doing to meet these promises, tackle global warming and reduce their store's carbon footprint.

Challenge local businesses

Look at major employers and companies in your area. Do they have environmental policies? How many local businesses leave their lights on all night? Do they recycle? Could they switch to green energy and energy efficient vehicles? Have they measured their carbon footprint?

Lots of companies have adopted Environmental Management Systems such as ISO14001 and EMAS. These systems outline what the company does in terms of its environmental responsibilities, how it handles its waste, energy, water, transport and its employees etc. The systems mean that the company is independently assessed (just like Eco Schools) to gain the award ISO or EMAS and is constantly monitored for progress.

Contact local businesses and ask them for details of what they are doing to reduce their impact on the planet.

Act Globally

No one country can hope to resolve climate change alone. Scotland is a small country, responsible for a tiny fraction of world's greenhouse gas emissions, but we have a responsibility as a developed nation to take a lead and inspire others through our actions.

Join a campaign

There are numerous national and international campaigns that you, your friends and your school can get involved in.

Stop Climate Chaos coalition, the ever-growing coalition of more than 50 organisations, that aims to mobilise public concern, and through this the necessary political action, to stop climate chaos.

<http://www.stopclimatechaosscotland.org/>

350.org – an international campaign to keep carbon dioxide levels below 350 parts per million.

<https://350.org/>

Unite for climate – entry point into the youth world of climate action.

<http://www.uniteforclimate.org/>

The United Nations Environment Programme TUNZA for Youth aims to 'foster a generation of environmentally conscious citizens who will better influence decision-making processes and act responsibly to create a sustainable world'. The word 'TUNZA' means 'to treat with care or affection' in Kiswahili, a sub-regional language of Eastern Africa.

<http://www.unep.org/tunza/youth/>

Take personal action



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It's up to all of us to act now to fight global warming. The decisions you make now and in the future will have an impact on climate change. The choices you make and the things you buy make a real difference. More than 40% of all the UK's carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions are the direct result of actions taken by individuals.

The Energy Saving Trust offers more information on energy conservation and advice on how you and your family can be more energy efficient in your home.

<http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/>

Here are some simple things you can do now:

Use energy saving light bulbs

They use five times less energy and can last up to 12 times longer. Do you still have old inefficient incandescent light bulbs in your home? If everyone in the UK switched we could cut emissions of CO₂ by over 5 million tonnes.

Switch off your TV and gadgets

Your generation uses 30% more electricity than the last generation. It's time to switch off! Never leave your TV, computer or games console on standby, it wastes electricity. When you leave a room, switch off the light.

Computer monitors can use as much as 50% of the total energy needed to run your PC, so remember to switch yours off when you are not using it. Power wasted by TVs and gadgets

left on standby are currently responsible for about 3 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions in the UK.

Unplug your mobile phone charger

About 85% of teenagers waste energy and money by leaving their phone charger plugged in all the time. Unplug it. Mobile phone chargers left plugged waste more than £60 million of electricity in the UK every year! This goes for iPods and games consoles as well. You could even buy a portable solar-powered charger to power your mobile and MP3 player.

Shop sustainably

Food miles add millions of tonnes of CO₂ to the atmosphere. Don't buy food that has been transported half way around the world. Buy local produce and learn how to eat seasonally. Use a cloth shopping bag instead of plastic bags. Buy what you need and throw away less food.

Buy organic and Fair Trade

Organic farming aims to work with natural processes and minimise the use of non-renewable natural resources. It has an important contribution to make to protecting and enhancing our rural environment.

Organic farming methods are typically associated with biodiversity, pollution control, energy efficiency and soil protection benefits. They also have to meet specific requirements for animal health and welfare.

By buying Fair Trade³ products, you can help farmers and workers in developing countries.

Avoid over-packaging

Try to avoid convenience foods that have lots of packaging. Buy loose fruit and vegetables, rather than pre-packed. Tell retailers if you think a product is over-packaged.

Taps not bottles

Bottled water can cost twice as much as petrol, three times as much as milk and 10,000 times as much as tap water. The plastic used to make water bottles takes years to biodegrade. Tap water's a healthy alternative, and you can keep a jug in the fridge if you like it chilled.

Buy refills

Many bathroom and cleaning products are available as refills, which cuts down on packaging.

Turn down the heating

Turning the thermostat down by a few degrees will reduce the energy you use and help cut your fuel bills. Turn down your hot water setting too. Talk to your parents and relatives about switching to a green energy tariff.

Use your hot water economically - take a short shower instead of a bath. By taking showers instead of baths, we could save enough water each week for 1,000 cups of tea.

³ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/International/int-dev/FairTrade>

Wash your clothes at 30°C

Choosing the 30°C wash cycle cuts 40% off the electricity used at higher temperatures. Don't forget to dry your clothes on a washing line. If you buy quality clothes they'll last longer and reduce your carbon footprint.

Recycle and reuse

Don't always throw things in the bin when you have finished with them or no longer want them. Every day in Scotland we throw out enough waste to fill Hampden Park football stadium. You can recycle cans, plastic, glass, paper and cardboard.

Start a compost heap - almost one-third of the average household bin contains materials that could be composted.

Don't chuck out things you're finished with - give them to charity shops. Buy products made from recycled materials.

Recycling can also save energy and have other benefits. Recycling one glass jar can save enough energy to light a 15 watt energy efficient light bulb for 24 hours and recycling one aluminium can saves enough energy to run a TV for 3 hours.

Each tonne of paper recycled saves 15 average-sized trees, as well as their surrounding habitat and wildlife.

Reuse your old carrier bags

Instead of picking up a free carrier bag every time you go shopping, try and remember to reuse your old carriers or use a 'bag for life' or cloth bags.

Recycle when you shop

Don't forget, your local supermarket probably has a recycling point so you can recycle when you shop.

Walk, cycle or use public transport

Reducing your car use reduces your CO₂ emissions. If you can, walk or use a bicycle, or take the bus, subway or train. Talk to your parents and relatives about reducing their car use.

Reduce your carbon footprint

Work out what your own and your family's carbon footprint is and act together to reduce it. Get your parents to talk to their friends, relatives and employers about acting on climate change.

Tell people about climate change

Start with your family and friends. Tell them what you are doing and tell them how they can make a difference too.

Take personal action - your family and future



Drive smarter and choose an efficient car

The Energy Saving Trust⁴ has some simple tips on how you can reduce your engine's workload, burn less fuel and produce less CO₂. The average car burns 15% more fuel when driven at 70 mph than at 55 mph.

If you buy a car choose a more efficient model. This will cut your carbon emissions and save you money on vehicle tax and fuel.

Switch to a green energy tariff

Where do you get your electricity - from a coal-fired power station or from renewable sources? Find out about the green energy tariffs that are available in your area and choose one that's right for you. You can even generate your own electricity by buying a wind turbine, biomass heater or solar panels. You might be able to get a grant to help pay for installing renewable energy technologies in your home.

Insulate your home

You can save hundreds of pounds a year by properly insulating your home. Insulating your loft is a simple way to save energy and money. Make sure your hot water tank and pipes are insulated and insulate your wall cavities. Draught-proof your house. Double glazing will cut your energy bills and cuts heat loss through windows by 50%.

Buy energy efficient goods

Look for the Energy Saving Recommended logo when you buy a wide range of products, including washing machines, fridges, dishwashers, light bulbs, boilers, and digital televisions. These products use less energy, are cheaper to run and have less of an environmental impact.

Also consider how you use these energy hungry products - if everyone boiled only the water they needed to make a cup of tea instead of filling the kettle every time, we could save enough electricity in a year to power all the UK's street lights for 7 months.

⁴ <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/travel>

Think before you fly

Every flight you take emits CO₂ into the atmosphere. Instead of taking short-haul flights take the train in the UK and to nearby countries and cut your emissions by up to 90%. If you have to fly, offset the carbon generated by your flight. Take fewer flights and stay for longer when you fly. If you fly a return trip between Scotland and New York you generate between 1.5 and 2 tonnes of carbon dioxide. Is your flight really important?

Teach your children about climate change

The next generation will grow up in a world affected by climate change. Make sure your children learn how to tackle global warming. Have climate-friendly children - use cloth nappies instead of wasteful disposables, walk your children to school instead of driving them, teach them to switch things off and how to recycle and reuse.