Hampshire County Council
Improvement and Advisory Service

HIAS MOODLE OPEN RESOURCE

Climate Action Planning:

Supporting Decarbonisation

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Final version

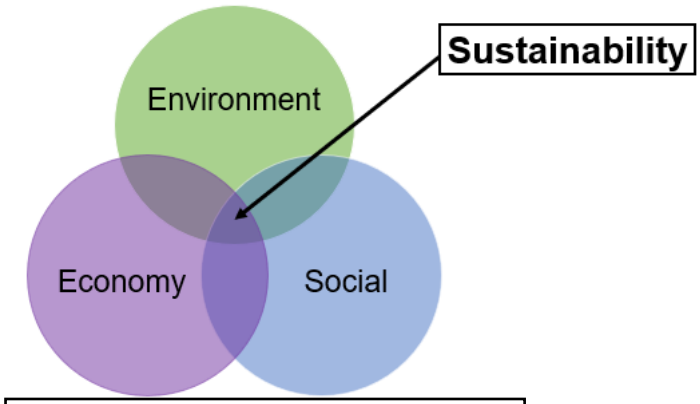
Overview

This document contains…
An introduction to climate action planning and guidance to help schools identify targeted areas for action in the decarbonisation area of climate action planning.

Points to consider when using this resource
Information in this resource is current at time of publication but might be subject to change. This resource is one of four resources created for schools to support them in the four areas of climate action planning: decarbonisation, adaptation and resilience, encouraging biodiversity and climate education and green careers. Further resources will follow on the HIAS Climate Unity Moodle.

Sustainability and climate action

If something is sustainable, it can continue for a long period of time. A successful eco-system is sustainable – it manages and recycles resources effectively and is resilient against negative disturbances. Sustainability can be categorised into three spheres: social, economical and environmental sustainability and can be on a local, national and global scale. Some models also add a fourth area of human/cultural sustainability.



The three spheres of sustainability

If we are sustainable, we are meeting our current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. Climate action is a critical part of this. Through taking steps to combat climate change, we are helping safeguard the planet for future generations so they can live in a sustainable, resilient environment.

Climate Action is one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals https://sdgs.un.org/ and is part of The 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda adopted by all UN member states in 2015.

How does this link to schools?

The 2022 policy paper from the Department for Education (DfE) set an ambitious vision of the UK becoming the world's leading education sector in sustainability and climate change by 2030 (DfE, 2022).

1. Excellence in education and skills for a changing world: preparing all young people for a world impacted by climate change through learning and practical experience.
2. Net zero: reducing direct and indirect emissions from education and care buildings, driving innovation to meet legislative targets and providing opportunities for children and young people to engage practically in the transition to net zero.
3. Resilience to climate change: adapting our education and care buildings and system to prepare for the effects of climate change.
4. A better environment for future generations: enhancing biodiversity, improving air quality and increasing access to, and connection with, nature in and around education and care settings.

The guidance breaks down the vision to provide five areas where schools and educators should focus:

1. Climate education – helping young people become global citizens by understanding climate change and appreciating nature.
2. Green skills and careers – teaching children the knowledge and skills for green jobs.
3. Educational estate and digital infrastructure – government to provide advice to support schools in achieving a green and sustainable education estate.
4. Operation and supply chains – co-ordination and leadership to introduce children and young people to more sustainable practices.
5. International – respond to international action and make a difference to young people all over the world.

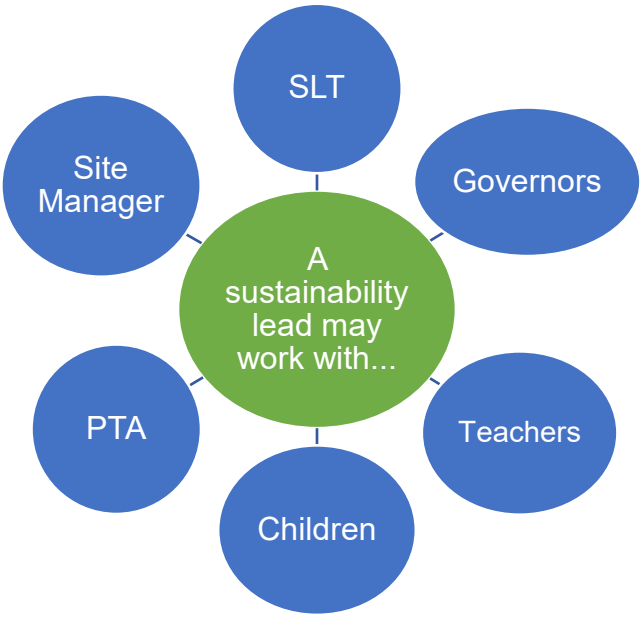
Source: Sustainability and climate change: a strategy for the education and children's services systems - GOV.UK (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainability-and-climate-change-strategy/sustainability-and-climate-change-a-strategy-for-the-education-and-childrens-services-systems)

This guidance is non-statutory but sets out a key initiative for all schools to have a nominated sustainability lead and a climate action plan in place for 2025.

What is a sustainability lead?

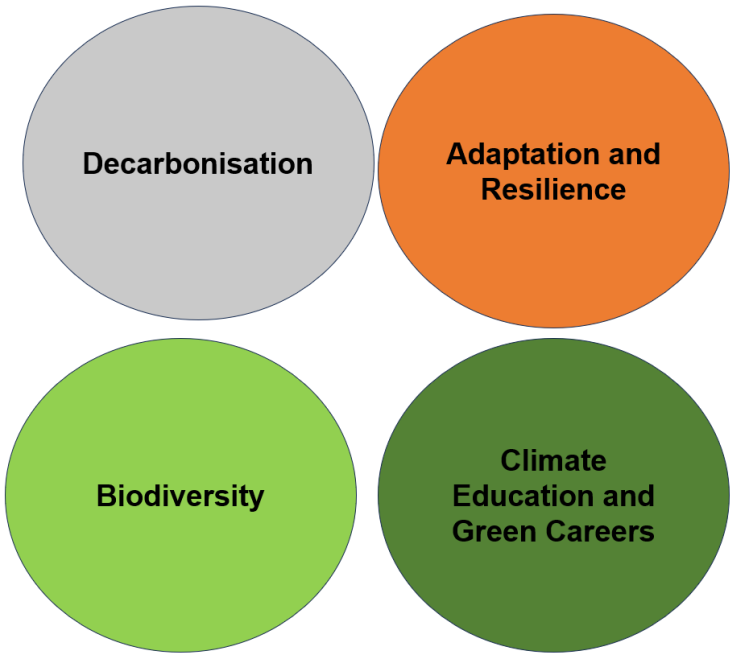
A sustainability lead is a co-ordinator and facilitator. They are a champion for climate action in the school and work with school leaders and stakeholders to create, develop and implement a climate action plan. Sustainability leads could be senior and middle leaders, teachers, estate managers or governors. There can also be more than one sustainability lead within a school as long as this is supportive of the implementation and impact of the climate action plan.

The climate action plan will involve a range of initiatives, and its successful implementation will require the active support of various stakeholders across the school community. Each stakeholder brings unique perspectives, skills, and experiences that can enrich the planning process and strengthen outcomes. Establishing a sustainability working group is an effective way to harness this collective expertise and foster collaboration toward shared environmental goals.



What is climate action planning?

A climate action plan is a document that helps schools outline actions to reduce their environmental impact and adapt to climate change. Climate action plans should cover the four following areas:



Source: Sustainability leadership and climate action plans in education - GOV.UK (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/sustainability-leadership-and-climate-action-plans-in-education)

This resource focuses on the **decarbonisation** aspect of climate action planning. It includes guiding questions to help settings assess their current carbon footprint and identify potential future actions to include in their climate action plans. Additionally, it offers useful links and contacts to further support schools during the climate action planning process.

There is currently no statutory template for a climate action plan. However, it may be helpful to structure it similarly to other strategic documents. The plan should include clearly defined, measurable actions, each with a specific timeframe. You may also wish to identify the staff members responsible for supporting and monitoring the successful implementation of each action. Organisations such as Let's Go Zero and Climate Ambassadors offer free templates schools may wish to use. See below for links to these websites.

Supporting decarbonisation

Decarbonisation is the process of reducing carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions, especially those produced through human activities such as heating, electricity use, transport, and waste. Although emissions can come from physical sources, it is our everyday choices and behaviours that significantly contribute to the problem. In schools, supporting decarbonisation helps reduce environmental impact and contributes to the national goal of reaching net zero carbon emissions by the year 2050.

It also plays an important role in preparing young people to live and work in a more sustainable and environmentally responsible society.

The guidance provided below is categorised into four distinct areas: energy and utilities, transport, food and school purchases to assist schools in identifying targeted areas for action.

Energy and Utilities

Key questions to consider

- What types of energy does the school use (eg gas, electricity, renewables)?
- How much energy is consumed annually, and how is this monitored?
- Are buildings insulated and designed to retain heat efficiently?
- Are heating and cooling systems modern and energy-efficient?
- Are lights, computers, and other equipment turned off when not in use?
- Are renewable energy sources (eg solar panels) being used or considered?
- How is water usage tracked and managed across the site?
- Are there systems in place to detect and fix leaks promptly?
- Is the school using smart meters or energy management systems?
- How are the students being educated in responsible use of energy and utilities?
- Has your school's DEC (Display Energy Certificate rating improved in recent years or declined?
- Are there any Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points on site?

Steps schools could take to reduce carbon emissions

- Improve insulation of walls, lofts and pipes to prevent heat loss and improve temperature control.
- Conduct an energy audit or assessment. The Hampshire Energy Team, organisations such as Let's Go Zero and websites such as Count your Carbon can support with this.
- Install energy efficient lighting (eg LED) and motion sensors.
- Make sure heating systems are well maintained and reflect if the timing settings on the system are energy efficient.
- Ask the students to help you conduct an energy survey to highlight the biggest users of energy in the school. This will help highlight to them (and staff) the importance of being energy efficient.
- Each class has an eco-monitor. The eco-monitor checks the teacher cupboard light, interactive whiteboard and classroom lights are turned off when not in use and that the classroom blinds are open when appropriate. You could even have a school competition to see which class is the most responsible with their energy use.
- Take regular meter reads to ensure accurate billing. Reads can be sent to the Hampshire Energy Team.
- Use the Medic Portal to monitor energy use and spot trends/anomalies. Contact the Hampshire Energy Team for details and advice.

- If your school has Solar PV, use the monitoring platform to check generation and performance of the system. Contact the Hampshire Energy Team for login details and advice.
- Calculate your emissions using the Carbon Emissions tool in the Moodle area.
- Review your Display Energy Certificate Rating and the recommendations outlined in the recommendation report.
- Set realistic energy targets to work towards each year.
- Consider renewable sources of energy such as solar panels. Some organisations can provide grants for the instillation of these. Contact the Hampshire Energy Team or Let's Go Zero for more information.
- Install an outside water butt to gather excess rainwater to water plants.
- Install push taps in school bathrooms to conserve water use.
- You can discuss energy efficiency with your Management Surveyor at your management partnership meeting.

Useful links and contacts:

energy@hants.gov.uk – Hampshire Energy Team contact

emma.groves@hants.gov.uk – HIAS lead adviser for sustainability

https://letsgozero.org/ – Let's Go Zero website

www.countyourcarbon.org/ – free carbon calculating website

www.solarforschools.co.uk/ – solar panels website

BMSI Medic Energy – Medic Portal for SMART meter electricity and gas data – HCC Energy Management Platform

Energy efficiency: guidance for the school and further education college estate - GOV.UK – Government guidance for energy efficiency in schools

Find an energy certificate - GOV.UK – database to access your schools Display Energy Certificate

Transport

Key questions to consider

- How do most staff and students travel to school?
- Are there safe walking, wheeling and cycling routes to the school?
- Do staff, students and visitors have safe places to leave bikes or scooters at school?
- Where do parents park for pick-up and drop off? Do any parents wait with their engines running in non-parking spaces?
- Is there anywhere that could operate as a Park and Stride facility to encourage families to park away from the school and benefit from exercise?
- How is transport used for school trips?
- Are carbon miles considered when choosing school trip destinations?
- Are students encouraged to promote sustainable and active travel?
- What behaviour change initiatives are in place to promote active and sustainable travel to school? Is a School Travel Plan in place?
- Are key messages surrounding sustainable and active travel translated into different languages to make them more inclusive and accessible?
- How are staff, students, parents/carers and visitors signposted to local public transport in the area?
- Does the school own a minibus? Is it fuel-efficient or electric? How is it used?
- Do children have the chance to practise riding bicycles or balance bikes at school? How are these adapted to allow all children to access them?

Steps schools could take to reduce carbon emissions

- Engage in schemes in Bikeability to help students learn the life skill of riding a bike (see link below for further information).
- Discover sustainable travel initiatives and ideas that can be bespoke for your school and area by getting in touch with Hampshire County Council's Travel Planning Team for a personalised visit or visiting the My Journey Hampshire website (see link below).
- Get in touch with the Hampshire County Council Travel Team or Hampshire Property Services to discuss the most appropriate options available to your school for essential car users, eg setting up a Park and Stride site and behaviour change initiatives promoting active and sustainable travel.
- Work with Hampshire County Council's Travel Team to create a School Travel Plan.
- Participate in the national Walk to School Week on 19-23 May 2026 or one of the other active or sustainable travel events (see below for calendar link).
- Include public transport and traffic surveys in geography fieldwork.
- Educate children in road safety through assemblies and visitor speakers.

Useful links and contacts:

travelplans@hants.gov.uk Hampshire County Council's Travel Planning Team contact.

emma.groves@hants.gov.uk – HIAS lead adviser for sustainability

www.hants.gov.uk/business/propertyservices/sectors-projects/education – Hampshire Property Services website

https://myjourneyhampshire.com/education/ – My Journey website.

https://myjourneyhampshire.com/education/modeshift-stars-for-hampshire-schools/ Modeshift Stars Hampshire website.

www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/participation-lifelong-learning/bikeability - Bikeablity scheme link.

www.britishcycling.org.uk/getinvolved/article/20200325-getinvolved-Getting-the-most-out-of-UK-Ready-Set-Rid-0%20 – a selection of videos showing different stages of learning to ride a bike covering balance bikes, bicycles and preparing to ride games.

mj-scooter-toolkit_final.pdf – a guide to teaching children how to ride scooters.

https://myjourneyhampshire.com/education/my-journey-school-calendar-and-planner/ – a calendar of active and sustainable travel events.

www.hants.gov.uk/transport/roadsafety – road safety area of Hampshire County Council website.

https://myjourneyhampshire.com/newsletter-sign-up – Hampshire County Council's Travel Planning Team newsletter subscription link.

Food

Key questions to consider

- Can the school reduce the frequency of high-carbon meals (eg red meat) in its menus?
- Are there themed days or campaigns to promote low-carbon eating (eg 'Vegan Day')?
- Is the catering team trained in sustainable food preparation and waste reduction?
- Can leftover food be safely redistributed or composted?
- Are portion sizes appropriate to reduce uneaten food?
- Do all schools have a food-waste bin in their classes or in communal areas?
- How are children being educated in food waste?
- How is food waste being monitored?

Steps schools could take to reduce carbon emissions

- Use a meter stick to measure the level of food waste in the bin(s) where children eat lunch. Use this to monitor and reflect on food waste on particular days.
- Install food-waste bins around the school so only organic material is collected.
- Consider creating a compost heap on the school-site.
- Educate students on and use seasonal and local produce where possible.
- Educate students on where food comes from.
- Consider growing fruit and vegetables on the school site to use in the kitchen or for a school snack.
- Include a climate education/sustainability link when teaching children about trade and the distribution of natural resources in Key Stage 2 geography.

Useful links and contacts:

https://proveg.org/uk/school-plates/ – The Pro Veg website contains advice and videos to encourage plant-based eating.

Where does food come from? - KS1 - BBC Bitesize BBC Two - Markets, Where does our food come from? – BBC clips that show where food comes from.

School Purchases

Key questions to consider

- Does the school have a sustainable procurement policy in place?
- Does the school consider buying locally to reduce carbon-emissions from deliveries?
- Are products chosen for their durability?
- Could digital resources be used instead of paper resources to reduce waste?
- Are products recycled where possible or placed in recycle waste when appropriate?
- Do you bulk-buy resources to reduce carbon emissions?

Steps schools could take to reduce carbon emissions

- Think carefully about what you want to purchase to avoid lots of returns and additional deliveries.
- Consider shopping locally where possible.
- Work with climate-minded suppliers. Suppliers will often give information about this on their websites.
- Consider purchasing from suppliers with third-party certification. This means the suppliers are more likely to provide credible and transparent verification of their environmental claims.
- Monitor how much is being printed at school. Is there a system on the photocopier to stop documents being printed accidentally? Adapt timetables so teachers can share printed resources where possible.

- Invest in a whiteboard cleaning spray and bio-degradable whiteboard rubbers for every class to avoid oils from children's fingers drying out whiteboard pens, leading to frequent repurchasing.
- Think of initiatives to encourage children to put lids on glue sticks and whiteboard pens to avoid them drying out quickly.

What are carbon sinks?

A carbon sink is a natural or artificial system that absorbs more carbon dioxide than it releases. Forests, soil and oceans are Earth's biggest natural carbon sinks.

Planting trees and installing planters on school grounds can help support decarbonisation in the school environment. Many organisations such as The Woodland Trust www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/ offer free trees to schools for planting.

Climate Unity

emma.groves@hants.gov.uk – HIAS lead adviser for sustainability.

For further details on the full range of services available please contact us using the following email:

htlcdev@hants.gov.uk

Upcoming Courses

Keep up-to-date with our learning opportunities for each subject through our Upcoming Course pages linked below. To browse the full catalogue of learning offers, visit our new Learning Zone. Full details of how to access the site to make a booking are provided here.

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- Assessment
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