

# School pupils lead the green charge at climate action event

By Ashley Barnard

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**M**ORE than 100 pupils and teachers from schools across the North East gathered at Durham University for a special event to help them take meaningful action on climate change.

The event was part of a national project coordinated by Students Organising for Sustainability UK (SOS UK), and was supported in the North East via a collaboration including the University's Durham Energy Institute.

It aimed to equip pupils with the tools, knowledge and confidence to create and implement their own Climate Action Plans (CAP).

The UK Government asked all schools in England to have a CAP in place because schools and universities represent 36 per cent of the total UK public sector building emissions.

CAPs provide schools with a clear framework to reduce their emissions by implementing energy efficiency measures and nature-based solutions.

The Durham event encouraged pupils and teachers to translate ideas into concrete steps to embed sustainability across their schools.

Among those attending were pu-

pils from Escomb Primary School in Bishop Auckland, Gosforth East Middle School and Byers Green Primary School in Spennymoor.

Participants left the event with clear priorities and practical steps to implement at their schools.

This included mapping habitats in their school grounds to identifying opportunities for energy-saving measures and student-led eco-initiatives.

Crucially, the workshops placed students at the heart of decision-making.

City of Durham MP Mary Foy attended the event and said it was 'deeply encouraging' to see pupils come together to take ownership of their education and their future.

She added: "I am proud that young people in my constituency are playing such an active role in driving the change they wish to see – showcasing that the environment is a cause close to their hearts.

"As their MP, I'll be glad to be their voice in Westminster whenever they need me to push these hugely important issues."

Eva, a student from Escomb Primary School in County Durham,

said: "I didn't realise there were so many ways I could help my school become more environmentally friendly.

"I'm really excited to go back and start creating our own Climate Action Plan."

Stephanie Wilkinson, a Year 2 teacher at Escomb Primary School, said the event had inspired the school to move ahead with its CAP.

Amy Padfield, Senior Project Manager, SOS UK said: "Our workshops have demonstrated that the most powerful resource schools have in setting and implementing CAPs are their students themselves."

Hosting and supporting the event reflects Durham University's long-standing leadership in climate science, energy systems and environmental sustainability research.

Durham is home to world-leading expertise in areas including renewable energy and climate resilience.

Seven of the university's researchers attended the recent 30th Conference of the Parties (COP30) in Brazil, working at the forefront of discussions shaping the future of climate action and sustainability.





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