

WRITTEN SUBMISSION FROM CHILDRENS CLIMATE CHANGE PROJECT

Children's Climate Change Project 2008

"Which world would we want? One all burned up or one all lovely and equal? It's your choice".
(MCP)

The Project: In spring 2008, 20 Members of the Children's Parliament in Scotland were invited to take part in the Children's Climate Change Project. This innovative project was brought together by WWF Scotland, the Children's Parliament and Children in Scotland, to engage young people in the global debate on climate change and particularly the national debate on the Scottish Climate Change Bill which was being developed by Scottish Government.

Young people were not directly targeted in the formal consultations around the Bill. The organisations that developed the project felt that children should be engaged in this debate, not only as citizens in their own right, but also because they have arguably the biggest stake in the decisions made about what we do to tackle climate change. The project was kindly supported by Scottish Government and the Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People.

In advance of a Climate Change Project Camp, all the children received packs of information and some tasks related to the project were undertaken at home. Over the weekend camp in Kinghorn, Fife in June 2008, the children learned about climate change, how Parliament works and the Climate Change Bill. They stayed in yurts, role played as scientists, historians, politicians and activists and discussed their aspirations for Scotland's Climate Change Bill. The children's views were captured in a mural which showed their own journey over the project and the journey of the Bill to being strong and delivering a green, happy 'eco world' or too weak (or thrown out) and resulting in a 'burned up' world. On return to their communities across Scotland, they talked with more children and adults, reaching around 200 children in the whole exercise of the project. The children exhibited the mural and presented their findings to the Scottish Climate Change Minister, MSPs and the Children's Commissioner in the Festival of Politics in Edinburgh in August 2008.

The children have been supported to submit this short report of their conclusions as written evidence to the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee of the Scottish Parliament and hope to continue to contribute to the debate on the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill on its journey through Parliament.

About the children: Twenty children from diverse social backgrounds and from across Scotland signed up for the Children's Climate Change Project. They were aged between 9-14 years old and are Members of the Children's Parliament (MCPs) in the Western Isles, Fife, North Edinburgh and South Ayrshire.

Key messages

The strongest message from the project is one of individual and shared responsibility:

Now is the time to make a difference and help stop climate change and Scotland should lead with a strong climate change bill.

Taking responsibility; taking action.

- 1. Children are worried about the future if we do nothing about climate change.**
- 2. Children are concerned about how climate change affects people in Scotland, their health and wellbeing, as well as people in other countries.**
- 3. Children are concerned how climate change affects other living creatures, particularly endangered species.**

The children learned some important things:

4. The children became more familiar with the language and terms used when adults are talking about climate change. They also learned about the language of Parliament: a Bill, the role of a committee, MSPs and citizens.
5. They have learned about the nature of our atmosphere, about the causes and effects of greenhouse gases. They have explored energy production, transportation, and how our consumer choices affect climate change.
6. The children learned about how our lives have changed from hunter-gatherers to traditional and now modern farming, to use of machinery, to international travel and demands for food and other products from all over the world.
7. The children have learned about a growing world population, and how our history and industrial development here in Scotland has played its part in today's climate change.
8. The children learned about the damage that is done by plastics, packaging and oil based pesticides.
9. We use a lot of landfill. Children learned that anything that is *biodegradable* can break down, and that composts release less methane than landfill rubbish.
10. The children discussed how active citizens have been successful in changing things for the better throughout history.

Children want their voices heard.

They want to be active citizens and have their say about climate change

11. The children would like to influence what politicians and Government decides about climate change.
12. The children had lots of discussion about different ways to do it.

Children have identified some important debates and dilemmas

13. The children said there should be more education and debate to inform children and adults about climate change.
14. The children explored and debated the pros and cons of various technologies in helping to reduce CO2 emissions.
15. The children felt that sometimes technology is too expensive.
16. There were concerns about environmental impact.
17. The groups were divided about nuclear power. Some children agreed that nuclear power is OK if "*the waste could be dealt with safely*" but others were strongly opposed to it.
18. The children debated whether laws or punishing people if they do not follow rules about things like composting or saving water is necessary.
19. The children considered how to get people off aeroplanes and on to other transport.

The children identified things we need to do about climate change:

20. The children identified things that individuals can do to reduce energy use and their impact on the environment. Individually, and in their family life, people can cut down on their personal energy use if they:
 - a. walk and cycle more
 - b. use their cars less or share your car
 - c. use less household energy
 - d. compost and recycle
 - e. buy locally produced food or grow your own
 - f. buy locally made products
 - g. use public transport more
 - h. fly less

The children concluded that:

21. We should use technology to help reduce the damage we do.
22. There should be more use of sustainable energy technologies like wave, hydro, tide, solar and wind power.
23. These should be affordable. They should be developed in a way that is sensitive to local people's opinion and the environment.
24. We must protect forests.
25. The Government should help people use less energy by improving public transport
26. The Government should make laws that affect what people can do, if what they do is damaging the planet.
27. The Government could:
 - a. ration petrol
 - b. encourage people not to fly
 - c. ban products that are bad for the environment
 - d. make sure new buildings meet energy efficiency standards
 - e. help people understand their own personal energy use and any damage they might be doing.

What should be in the Scottish Climate Change Bill?

The children came up with and discussed the following ideas for the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill. During role play as Members of the Scottish Parliament considering the Scottish Climate Change legislation they debated many of these ideas. The two marked ** were selected in particular, discussed and approved by the children's own version of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee.

Transport:

- Each bus should have more than 20 people
- Scotland should spend more money on public transport
- The number of people in a car should be 3-4 people
- Make petrol that does not pollute the earth
- If they don't have 3-5 people [in a car] they would get a fine of £100
- You should be payed to cycle (over 2/3 hours)
- Prices of short distance planes should go up to discourage people from going from Edinburgh to London by plane **
- Scotland should spend money making our public transport better
- They should lower the price of eco-friendly cars: electricity, hydrogen, etc.
- Make electric-normal hybrid buses
- Increase car tax/prices and reduce price of eco-friendly rural public transport
- The government should look into new, alternative fuel sources i.e wave, hydro-electric. Also, invest in hydrogen fuel cell cars. They are the way forward! **
- Cars have to be very fuel efficient by law
- In the suburbs, promote lanes for bicycles. This is safer.
- Car companies should be paid grants to invent cars that run on water or hydrogen
- Planes should fill up the whole plane with people before leaving the airport and if not all seats, most of them.

On waste:

- Recycle all plastic, cans, glass etc.
- Everyone should have an organic bin scheme like in the Western Isles

On energy:

- Turn off all electrical appliances when not using
- Scotland should encourage people to buy solar panels and wind turbines by making them cheaper.
- There should be a fine for people who waste energy
- An eventual ban on normal light bulbs to allow for energy-saving ones

General:

- Local food should be served in school dinners, hospitals and prisons
- Get a filtration system to save on water (recycle)
- Plant better trees in inner cities
- Cut the Scottish carbon dioxide emissions by 80%
- Earthship schools

Steering Group and Funders

This learning and consultation project was designed, facilitated and supported by a number of organisations. The Steering Group members are WWF Scotland, Children's Parliament, Children in Scotland and Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People. The Steering Group are most grateful to Scottish Government and Children's Commissioner for the financial support to the project.

Thank you to all the children and adults who participated in and made this project possible.