



**Moorlands Climate Action (MCA)
Student Climate and Biodiversity Conference
Questions & Answers to the panel**

**Responses following student attendance
at Moorlands House, Leek at Staffordshire Moorlands
District Council (SMDC) Debating Chamber**

11th November 2025

With grateful thanks to funding from SMDC and DfE Climate Ambassadors Programme
Additional thanks to the panel and all who contributed to the conference

MCA Student Climate and Biodiversity Conference

Q&A Questions 4 of 8 schools

Moorside High School

- What are your current climate action priorities for our local area?
- How can schools and youth groups collaborate with the council on sustainability projects?
- What funding or support is available for eco initiatives in schools?

Churnet View Middle School

- What are you going to do about the growing threat of climate change and how do you plan to fix it?
- What does climate change mean to you?
- What can our society do to help?
- What will happen to our future lives if we start acting now?
- How can the community help with the litter situation?

Endon High School

- Why is it that carbon emissions for agriculture don't take into account the carbon cycle and the carbon sink of the grass/crops grown to produce animal food?
- How has the current County Councils policies changed since the new administration overturned the precious declaration of Climate Emergency at the Council?

Cheadle Academy

- How do we make sure that Climate Action remains a priority even when councillors and their agenda's and politics change?
- Trump isn't going to this week's COP in Brazil - how important is that?
- Is COP still viable without the world's leaders?
- What impact does being vegan / flexitarian have on climate?
- How important is local food in the fight against climate change?"

Moorside High School

Q What are your current climate action priorities for our local area?

A The council has a Climate and nature delivery plan, which focusses on mitigation, adaptation, plan for nature and change (behaviour change and community engagement). Should be going live on the website soon.

Q How can schools and youth groups collaborate with the council on sustainability projects

A Get in touch. We would love to hear from you and see what projects you have planned. You can email: climatechangesmdc@staffs Moorlands.gov.uk

A Also - Writing in to their local ward councillors is a good start. Also, any letters of support for e.g. our reduced mowing regimes are well received and help contribute towards the Council expanding out the scheme.

Q What funding or support is available for eco initiatives in schools?

A **National Nature Education Park** have funding for projects that are looking to convert grey spaces in schools – green, but only for eligible schools. NNEP were at the event. (MCA included contact details of all organisations attending and sent this to schools)

Let's Go Zero offer free support to schools on developing plans on how to reduce carbon emissions. LGZ were also at the event.

Look on Support Staffordshire's sites. Schools can often apply for community funding.

The council runs the Climate and Nature fund, which Support Staffordshire support. You can apply to the scheme. Schools cannot apply directly but projects can be supported by applications through the PTA or another group I believe a committee of governors could apply from a school. Further info here: [Community Climate Change Fund - Staffordshire Moorlands District Council](#). The latest round has just shut, but the fund will be open again soon. I can send details to MCA to distribute to schools once it's live.

The Council and Support Staffordshire can also help with advice on available other funding and grant applications. Small grants to community-based organisations taking measures locally to tackle the climate and nature emergencies. The Climate and Nature fund includes examples such as tree planting and habitat improvement, educative actions to increase awareness and the skills needed to change and adapt lifestyles, green travel/transport schemes, energy saving in community buildings, local food projects and recycling and reuse projects. For example, the Council has previously supported after schools clubs and veg-growing projects.

Bernadette Colligan Climate Change Officer and **Katie Hampton** Biodiversity Officer HPBC and SMDC

Churnet View Middle School

Q What are you going to do about the growing threat of climate change and how do you plan to fix it?

A Climate change isn't just localised to our area and requires action from across the district, regionally, nationally and globally to make an impact. The council has a Climate and Nature Delivery Plan, which sets out the priorities for the Moorlands and the actions to meet those. The council aim to reduce carbon emissions as well as improve biodiversity and see where there are opportunities to adapt. We need to adapt more and more to extreme weather – as seen most recently with the flooding and disruption from Storm Claudia. Lots of council services are involved in the delivery of climate action and nature recovery, so our team is responsible for coordinating all this action and making sure we are keeping to targets. There is an opportunity to work collaboratively and be more efficient on delivering services as a whole council.

A Projects that will reduce carbon emissions and improve biodiversity are happening across the district. You may have seen some of this work at your local leisure centres in Biddulph, Leek and Brough Park – solar panels, heat recovery systems. All the stuff you don't see but is having an impact and making those buildings more sustainable for your generation and future generations

Bernadette Colligan Climate Change Officer, **Katie Hampton** Biodiversity Officer High Peak Borough Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council,

Q What does climate change mean to you?

A We think this was covered in the Debating Chamber during the afternoon. Lots of you put your hands up to say what you thought it meant. The increasing change to our Earth's temperature will make most life on Earth more difficult and for many more uncomfortable. It will mean different things to different people depending on where they live. For some it will mean more wildfires, flooding or access to food and water, rising sea levels and warming oceans, for others it will mean we can grow different things that we couldn't grow before. It is useful to think about what it will mean because **we can act now** to adapt e.g. creating more tree shaded areas in towns and cities. Creating access to more public drinking water outlets especially in schools and workplaces. Perhaps you could think of your own school and what you might need for the future

Q What can our society do to help?

A If everyone does their bit, it can make a difference, be it using the car less, eating less meat or joining an environmental group. Sharing the message with friends & family, enjoy the natural world and care for it.

A Our society has a massive opportunity to do as much as possible to help solve climate change. Students especially have the power to make small changes which add up as others make the same changes from recycling more, using electric, public or active travel, helping the natural environment through tree planting and wildflower seed planting, litter picking and much more. Most importantly is speaking to your teachers, parents and other adults on the changes they can make to their homes, the school itself and transportation. By switching to electric, investing in solar panels and renovating our buildings and transport can become much more sustainable. Every little actions we take now counts as together; we have a massive impact.

Thomas Guilbert Newell, Sustainable environment Officer (Streets scene and Place) Newcastle under Lyne Borough Council

A Moorlands Climate Action (MCA) is one of thousands of climate and biodiversity **groups and organisations** in the UK working hard to raise awareness locally, running activities and events (like the student conference) to demonstrate what is being done locally and showing how we can **all** help. **Businesses throughout the UK** and beyond are already changing their work practices to produce less carbon, be more nature friendly and trying to tackle or adapt to climate issues. All countries to varying degrees have policies which are helping. Some are working very hard to combat climate change and reduce our emissions others less so. However, to do nothing is to do harm. If we all do something, however small, we are part of the solution not the problem

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Q What will happen to our future lives if we start acting now?

A If we start acting now and continue to make changes for a Net Zero society by 2050, we can expect a wonderful recovery in our future. We will still have to deal with climate change in the future as emissions don't disappear magically and can actually stay in our atmosphere from 10s-1,000s of years, so even if we become net zero by 2050 we may expect some more extreme climate in the future but less than if we continued to stay on a fossil fuel and pollution heavy path. Yes, we will have to continue to adapt to climate change if we act now however, we can expect cleaner air, more abundance of natural diversity, healthier food, clean water, better quality of life for all people including housing, food, pay, education, equality etc. so there are loads of wonderful aspects of a more sustainable society.

Thomas Guilbert Newell, Sustainable environment Officer (Streets scene and Place) Newcastle under Lyne Borough Council

A In our current situation there isn't such a thing as "fixing" the problem. To achieve a fix, we would have had to start working on it from the 1980's. The best case scenario we have currently is damage mitigation – irreversible damage has already been done to the environment as a whole and it has changed accordingly. To begin acting now on a global scale would be done with the aim of missing the 1.5 of global warming by 2030.

(if we start acting now) - What this means for the future of our lives.... Our children and our children's children would be stepping foot into a world that isn't actively hostile towards them and their existence. Whilst still affected, crops and farmland would still remain relatively stable. Global sea level rise would be slowed. The chances of a mass loss (of) species and the collapse of the insect populations would be reduced. It is difficult to compare how our lives would look now compared to a future in which we take climate change seriously as, for the general public, not much would change. However what is certain is that if we do not act, the lives we live now may not be comparable to those 50-70 years from now. The world will be an entirely different place. Humanity would live on, that is certainly, but to what quality of life? That's a difficult question to ask, let alone answer.

Harry Cotterill – panel member

A **This is an AI response:** Acting now to address climate change will prevent the most severe and irreversible impacts, secure a liveable future, and provide significant economic, health and environmental benefits. The sooner and more rapidly emissions are cut, the smaller the ultimate changes will be.

(AI, plus prolonged use of the Internet whether for industrial or personal use contributes to an enormous use of energy, water and Co2 emissions. It can be used for good but we must use it in moderation).

Q How can the community help with the litter situation?

A Apart from encouraging others to not drop litter especially 'take away' cartons from fast food outlets, You can sign up to Pick Fit and get rewards - [Pick-Fit - Staffordshire Moorlands District Council](#) also Moorlands Climate Action have regular 'Litter Picks' where you and a parent/adult over 18 can come and help clear away some of the rubbish left by others. You will be given a litter picker and bag. Litter pickers mean you don't need to touch the rubbish so they protect you from germs, metal or glass

Answered by panel members:

Bernadette Colligan Climate Change Officer, **Katie Hampton** Biodiversity Officer High Peak Borough Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, www.highpeak.gov.uk | Follow HPBC on [X \(Formerly Twitter\)](#) | [Facebook](#) www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk | Follow SMDC on [X \(Formerly Twitter\)](#) | [Facebook](#)

Thomas Guilbert Newell, Sustainable environment Officer (Streets scene and Place) Newcastle under Lyne Borough Council

Also Martin Harrison - National Education Nature Park, Senior Programme Officer, West Midlands

Harry Cotterill – panel member

Plus the Moorlands Climate Action Team: - www.moorlandsclimateaction.org.uk email: info@moorlandsclimateaction.org.uk

Endon High School

Q Why is it that carbon emissions for agriculture don't take into account the carbon cycle and the carbon sink of the grass/crops grown to produce animal food?

A - The simple answer is that these factors are not directly measured in the current emissions calculations due to the complexity and variability.

The focus is primarily on the direct emissions from agricultural practices, such as the use of fertilizers, pesticides, and machinery, which are known to release significant amounts of greenhouse gases.

A - When organisations measure carbon emissions, they often split into something called “scope 1, scope 2 and scope 3 emissions”. There are many different ways to measure carbon impact, and there is no ‘set standard approach’ as such, but most organisations use certain standards like the GHG protocol. <https://ghgprotocol.org/>

A - Generally to calculate each farm's potential CO₂ absorbance from crop biomass isn't considered, because by nature most of it will be broken down back to CO₂ as we eat it or are left to break down naturally in the field and re-emit CO₂. Crop residue will be broken down by fungus bacteria and animals, in most cases becoming CO₂ again.

As for native soil carbon, they are generally stable or even emitting with agriculture (in the case of these emissions I don't believe we include these in the carbon budget!). There may be soil carbon capture or emissions with changing the land use or agricultural practice. However, there are mechanisms to account for these changes in carbon both by the government and by the voluntary carbon market.

Bernadette Colligan Climate Change Officer and **Katie Hampton** Biodiversity Officer High Peak Borough Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

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www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk | Follow SMDC on [X \(Formerly Twitter\)](#) | [Facebook](#)

Derek Bell PhD. Soil Science (Staffs Moorlands)

Q How has the current County Councils policies changed since the new administration overturned the precious declaration of Climate Emergency at the Council?

A

- There is one policy and policy platform which has already been affected; others have not yet been affected
- The County's draft local Transport Plan omits mention of Net Zero, even though central government will reveal evidence on emissions reduction to release funding for roads, buses, trains or cycling
- The county has said it will oppose renewable energy planning applications; it is unlikely that they have the power to do this as districts and boroughs make the decisions
- We have not yet seen how they will change their climate and Environment Plan
- The draft Nature Recovery Strategy will probably not mention carbon reduction but most of it will be unaltered
- Most policies on waste and recycling are statutory and will have to be implemented anyway, whatever the new administration's views

A – **Mark Johnson** MCA member and District Councillor

Cheadle Academy

Q How do we make sure that Climate Action remains a priority even when councillors and their agenda's and politics change?

A. Even when councillors or politicians change, there are ways to make sure climate action stays important:

- **Community Pressure:** If local people — especially young voices — keep asking for climate action, councillors will feel that it matters to their voters. Public demand makes it harder to ignore.
- **Long-Term Plans:** Councils can adopt climate strategies that last for many years, not just one political term. These plans can set targets (like reducing emissions by 2030) that continue no matter who is in charge.
- **Laws and Policies:** When climate goals are written into official policies or local laws, they are harder to reverse. Councillors may change, but the rules stay in place.
- **Partnerships:** Schools, businesses, and community groups can work together on climate projects. That way, action doesn't depend only on politicians — it becomes part of everyday life.
- **Education and Awareness:** The more people understand climate change, the more they will expect leaders to act. Councillors who ignore it risk losing support. Look out for Climate Literacy courses in your area.
- **Youth Involvement:** Young people can join youth councils, climate groups, or campaigns. Councillors often listen when they see the next generation speaking up.

Mike plus a little help from AI

Q Trump isn't going to this week's COP in Brazil - how important is that?

- This can be summarised by concluding that without disruptive influences it is easier for talks to take place e.g. a quote from the Washington Post“With Trump absent from COP 30 talks, the world moves on without (the) U.S.... “As scientists sound the alarm, the world is committing to climate action with or without the United States. ”...
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/11/14/trump-cop30-climate-united-nations/>
November 14th 2025

Q. Is COP still viable without the world's leaders?

- Yes and no as COP still produces lots of very good outcomes and work for the world and its countries including agreements like the Paris Agreement and agreements surrounding reductions/bans on certain fossil fuels and climate funding for vulnerable countries. Even though world leaders may not be present at these events as they have representatives going, the agreements still come from leadership otherwise, they would not be agreed. However the presence of world leaders at COP would show more dedication to solving climate change and would create great learning and discussion opportunities with delegates and world leaders.

Thomas Guilbert Newell, Sustainable environment Officer (Streets scene and Place) Newcastle under Lyne Borough Council

Q. What impact does being vegan / flexitarian have on climate?"

- A. 1- Looking at data and research it suggests a vegan diet can be beneficial in terms of climate change 'UN says meat and dairy (farmed livestock) accounts for 11.2% of manmade greenhouse gas emissions. Source [Is a vegan diet better for the environment? | Good Food](#). What I would say that in my opinion it should be an informed, personal choice. And to consider the effect it may have on the farming community in places like the Staffordshire Moorlands.

Martin Harrison - National Education Nature Park, Senior Programme Officer, West Midlands

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Q. What impact does being vegan / flexitarian have on climate?"

A.2 - The Vegan diet is in most cases better for the environment than a flexitarian diet, when you consider greenhouse gas emissions, land use, fresh water use and water pollution. Around 22% of the global population follows some sort of plant-based diet and Younger people are more likely to be vegan or vegetarian, due to their knowledge of climate matters and willingness to try new things.

The Committee on Climate Change most recent report confirms that a shift towards a diet that's less reliant on carbon -intensive animal products could enable you as an individual to reduce your dietary emissions by 35%. Even if you only manage to cut out one red meat meal a week, that's better than nothing! The latest recommendations from the Committee on Climate Change claim that a 20% reduction in beef, lamb and dairy consumption would help the UK to cut its greenhouse gas emissions to almost zero by 2050. So that gives you something to aim for.

Sue Newman MCA (retired school cook and vegan)

Q How important is local food in the fight against climate change?

A. - I would always suggest eating local and seasonal food as well as reducing food miles, it supports your local/regional community, and growing your own food is fun and a great life skill. Look here for details regarding food miles <https://www.foodmiles.com/>

Martin Harrison - National Education Nature Park, Senior Programme Officer, West Midlands

A- Local food helps fight the climate crisis by reducing "food miles" which lowers greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. It also supports local, often more sustainable farming practices, reduces food waste, and can encourage eating seasonal produce, which is more energy-efficient to grow and store.

However, the impact of "what" you eat (e.g., meat vs plants) has a much greater effect on the climate than where it comes from.

Sue Newman MCA (retired school cook and vegan of many years)

A. - Pretty important I would say. Transport distances and greenhouses can massively increase the emissions associated with food production. However, it is important to remember that local meat production is often not entirely fed on a UK derived diet. Approximately 10% of Britain's soya needs for animal rearing is sourced from the deforested Amazon agriculture. Therefore eating local doesn't always mean it is entirely local.

Probably an even greater argument is the need for food and nutritional security. Climatic and geopolitical events can drastically impact everyday access to key dietary staples. Having robust and diversified agriculture in Britain would go a long way to protecting people in Britain.

Derek Bell PhD. (Soil Science) Staffs Moorlands

A Local food is highly important in the fight against climate change as to become sustainable and achieve a secure future our society must move away from large industrial agriculture to more localised agriculture to reduce emissions and ensure people are getting the best quality product. Without food we can't survive so it's highly important we get this right and ensure our food systems are local, sustainable and affordable to ensure we don't destroy the environment for our food systems but also ensures everyone has access to healthy food.

Thomas Guilbert Newell, Sustainable environment Officer (Streets scene and Place) Newcastle under Lyne Borough Council