This year London Climate Action Week (26 June – 4 July 2021) will host a Schools Climate Summit bringing together London’s school sector as a major force for climate action. London has an ambitious climate agenda and schools have a vital role to play in delivering it. However, meeting the city’s net zero, circular economy and broader Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 will require a step-change. While individual school efforts are inspiring, only a sectoral approach can create impact at scale. The LCAW Schools Climate Summit calls on London’s 3500 schools to think like a system & act as a sector.
The idea for a Schools Climate Summit came out of reflections after LCAW 2020 on how to enhance the impact of schools, youth and education sector climate initiatives. Most importantly by using a ‘whole school’ perspective engaging school leaders, governors, business managers, teachers, students, staff and the local community. The objective being to overcome fragmentation, address structural issues and build a cohesive sectoral response to the climate emergency. More on the rationale here.

The Summit will bring together London’s diverse education sector, local and national policy makers, youth and communities. Providing a platform for engagement, monitoring and recognition of achievement for schools of different types: state schools, independent schools, special schools, faith schools, alternative provision and international schools.

With an initial focus on secondary and primaries, the Summit will build on LCAW work with London’s world-class universities including Kings, Imperial and LSE to develop a schools-university mentoring & support partnership on climate action and sustainability.

The Summit will showcase work across London schools, including initiatives such as Eco-schools, Youth Climate Summit, Transform Our World, Let’s Go Zero, London National Park City schools, World’s Largest Lesson, Teach the Future, Fridays for the Future, etc.

Working with the Department for Education, Greater London Authority, London Councils, OFSTED, teaching unions and teacher networks, the Summit will highlight the policy reform agenda. And working with finance and private sector leaders from the Green Finance Institute, London First, Thames Water and London Employers, the Summit will address the finance, resilience, skills & careers agendas.

The GLOBE Student-MP Climate Surgery, following on the heels of the Summit, on Friday 2 July 2021, will give practical effect to Fridays for the Future call for action by facilitating constituency-based dialogue with London’s 73 Members of Parliament on their role in addressing the climate emergency. Part of ongoing efforts by GLOBE International to enhance civic education and citizenship.
Outcome of discussion with young Londoners, hosted by London Sustainable Development Commission at City Hall, as part of LCAW 2019
Summit objectives

The School Climate Summit’s objective is to create a platform for debate and action on the role of the education sector in the climate and sustainability transition. Scale is everything and schools can be a significant delivery mechanism for London’s net zero & circular economy goals. This will not happen overnight and the LCAW Summit will provide an annual focal point geared towards delivery by 2030. The first step is overcoming fragmentation and re-tooling to think as a school system and deliver as an education cluster.

Climate change is too often seen as a carbon mitigation problem alone and core challenges of adaptation and resilience neglected. This is especially relevant for the schools sector and the Summit will champion a balanced approach addressing both mitigation and adaptation, as well as the need to build resilience, through policy and practitioner engagement.

Specifically, the Summit will promote a risk-based approach to climate action and adoption of the Greater London Authority’s ground-breaking climate adaptation guidance across the London school estate (adapting as necessary). On the circular economy, the Summit will promote cooperation with London Councils and ReLONDON (formerly LWARB) on school strategies to promote zero waste through school-based efforts to reduce consumption emissions and food waste.

The Summit will also share initial results of the Schools Climate Action Map showing which schools are engaged in which climate/sustainability-related initiatives, to promote networking and collaboration.

The Summit seeks to raise awareness of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and promotes SDG targets 13.3 and 4.7 on climate and sustainability education.

As countries emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is fitting that public health and clean air are cross-cutting themes for LCAW 2021. The Summit will be working with the UN’s BreathLife campaign for clean air and schools are invited to actively participate.
A storytelling workshop with a group of Year 7 boys at Westminster City School – part of a cross-curricular project, *In Search of Aether*, exploring breath and our right to clean air that studio2909 has been delivering in collaboration with several secondary schools across London, and involving science and lung health experts from Imperial College London and Barts NHS Health Trust. The resulting podcast will be profiled as part of the Schools Climate Summit, amplifying their voices and positive visions of the future to wider publics.
Global reach and links to COP26

London has often set the pace for educational innovation and where the city leads, others have followed. The Schools Climate Summit will also leverage London’s status as a major global city to engage international education leaders and the youth and global climate communities. Working with partners including the UK and Italian co-presidencies for COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, the British Council, OECD, IUCN, UNESCO and others, the Summit will advance education for sustainable development in this pivotal year.

This year’s GLOBE Student-MP Climate Surgery, taking place across all of London’s 73 parliamentary constituencies during LCAW 2021, will be a major opportunity to connect the outcomes of the LCAW Schools Climate Summit and student voice with lawmakers. Linked to the LCAW London Climate Curriculum and designed as an opportunity to engage students directly with their local MPs on climate change, the day will seek to improve civic education and promote practical citizenship. Outcomes of the day will be communicated directly to the GLOBE COP26 Legislators Summit at the Scottish Parliament during COP26, bringing student voice into the main gathering of global parliamentarians at COP26.
The British Council, a key Summit partner, connects London's schools to the world through its flagship Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning programme, delivered alongside the FCDO. It helps teachers enhance lessons with global learning themes and gives students a platform to learn about and collaborate with peers in other countries on big issues such as climate change and sustainability. Across Greater London, around 300 schools have participated in this international programme opening new horizons for learning & partnership.

At the Schools Climate Summit on 29 June, the British Council will be hosting a Deep Dive explaining the programme. Details here.
Mindful of continuing pandemic constraints, the Summit will be a hybrid digital/on-site event consisting of three primary modes of engagement: school-based activities; participation in a curated official summit programme; and/or engaging in thematic ‘deep dives’ covering the Summit’s five major themes - the four ‘C’s and the one ‘F’. Each participating school is encouraged to organise events during the Summit using a ‘whole school’ model addressing the five core Summit themes.

London has a highly diverse school sector, scattered across its vast metropolitan geography, and inclusion is a key objective. The Summit will seek to ensure that schools from all of London’s inner and outer boroughs have an opportunity to engage, including from every school sector: state; independent; faith-based; alternative provision/ PRU; special needs and international.

Towards this, ‘Lighthouse’ schools will be appointed to act as beacons for their school sector and for school leaders to encourage peer-to-peer engagement. As the Schools Climate Summit 2021 is the start of a decade-long process of London-wide school engagement and sectoral transformation, our objective is to engage all of London’s 3500 over this period. The contribution of Lighthouse schools and school leaders will be key to achieving this ambition.
Glebe in Bromley is one of our Lighthouse schools for the Special Schools sector. Here students work on the pond as part of their coursework. The school is holding a banquet in its Wild Area for the Schools Climate Summit on 29th June.
Mental health and climate communication

As the country emerges from lockdown and children return to school, the damage wrought by the covid-19 pandemic to children’s mental health is being widely acknowledged. According to the Royal College of Psychiatry, one in six children in England is estimated to have a probable mental health condition, and the number of children being referred for help is increasing. England’s recent children’s commissioner, Anne Longfield, has warned that current provision for children is nowhere near sufficient to meet children’s needs and new government targets to increase access to care are needed. Schools are on the frontlines of this mental health pandemic, with staff, parents & carers and other members of the school community also affected.

Already in 2020, prior to the covid-19 pandemic, LCAW had begun to engage with the Climate Psychology Alliance to ensure that our engagement with children and young people did not exacerbate eco-anxiety and communication with young audiences was carefully crafted.

This work has taken on greater significance since the pandemic and we have produced Guidance on effective climate change communication with children in partnership with CPA. Mental health and climate communication will be integrated into the LCAW Schools Climate Summit agenda and longer-term work programme.
London was one of the first global cities to adopt and start implementing a climate action plan that is compatible with the Paris climate agreement to keep global warming below 1.5C degrees above pre-industrial levels.

Climate change and air pollution are key Mayoral priorities, with many schools engaged in initiatives across the city, including on adapting to climate change, reducing carbon emissions, recycling waste, reducing exposure by school children to poor air quality and helping to green London's environment.

Photo courtesy of Greater London Authority: Mayoral visit to West Acton Primary School, June 2021
How to take part

It’s easy to get involved! Participation is a bottom-up process. We encourage schools, students, staff, parents/carers and other members of the school & broader education community to organise their own events using the LCAW event registration site for 29 June 2021. In your event registration, please indicate that your event is part of the LCAW Schools Climate Summit.

A tool-kit with Schools Climate Summit badging logos and resources will be available from 1st June 2021 onwards.

Attendance details for the formal curated Schools Climate Summit programme and Deep Dive events for practitioners will be publicised on the SCS and LCAW websites from early-June onwards.

In the meantime, please encourage your London school to participate in the Schools Climate Action Map survey. This covers school activity across the five themes of the Summit and will be published ahead of the COP26 in Glasgow.

More information on Twitter @climate_london and Instagram @LDNschoolsclimate
Schools and those in the education sector can take part in the Schools Climate Summit in three ways: (a) through on-campus activities organized by the schools themselves, (b) a curated Summit programme or (c) by participating in deep dive thematic sessions. (The latter two being hybrid or online activities.)
School activities

Schools can organize their own activities using the holistic 4 ‘C’ & 1 ‘F’ whole school format, encompassing the Summit themes: Campus, Curriculum, Community, Careers & Finance. Summit branding and an organisers’ tool-kit will be among a number of free resources available for schools to use on the Summit website in the coming weeks.
There will be a day-long curated Summit programme featuring leadership from the schools & education sector, including senior politicians, policymakers, youth activists, parent/carers’ organisations, etc. International perspectives will be offered from other global climate education initiatives, the OECD, UN, World Economic Forum, British Council and others.
Deep dives into Summit themes the 4 ‘C’s and 1 ‘F’

There will be ‘deep dive’ online sessions and workshops, open to all interested Summit participants, on each of the 4 ‘C’s and the 1 ‘F’ themes with expert leads. Registration details and a calendar of events for the day will be available by mid-May.
Resources

In the coming weeks, LCAW will be producing a **Tool Kit** to support school engagement. This will include suggestions for activities and audiovisual resources drawing on LCAW partners.

The **LCAW Education Group** holds fortnightly community Zoom calls featuring inspirational initiative and speakers from the UK and abroad. Previous speakers have included Gillian Burke, BBC Springwatch/Autumnwatch presenter; Outdoor Classroom Day; Backyard Nature; Keep Scotland Beautiful & Scottish youth activists; EcoPeace Middle East and Koen Timmers, founder, Climate Action Project, etc. If you could like join, please get in touch.

The regular **DOORWAYS to Sustainable Schools** podcast by Martin Crabbe, London Sustainable Schools Forum, is an excellent resource featuring regular interviews with leaders in the schools and sustainability space in London and beyond.

Schools can already begin to use the **LCAW London Climate Curriculum** – a series of 4 unique lesson plans designed to introduce pupils to climate change and the UN Sustainable Development Goals in both local and global context. Aimed at Key Stages 2 and 3 (ages 10-14), the lesson plans draw on London as a classroom, using London landmarks and features such as the River Thames, the London Plane tree, cultural and scientific institutions such as the British Museum and Imperial College to illustrate climate impacts and solutions.

Originally designed for the debut LCAW in 2019 by Globe International, London Sustainable Schools Forum and World’s Largest Lesson, the curriculum is updated every year to tap into London’s unique cultural offerings and exhibitions to enhance student learning. The 2021 curriculum will include London landmarks such as Tate Modern, Battersea Power Station, the Thames Barrier, London Wetlands, Kew Garden sand Highgate Cemetery. It will be ready for direct download from mid-May onwards.
Any questions? Please contact:
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