

# BEP Climate Challenge Update Summer 2023



































## BEP

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### Introduction



Schools within the Bristol Education Partnership are working hard to tackle the climate emergency and are exploring ways of reaching the target of net zero carbon emissions at the earliest opportunity.

The BEP Climate Challenge Project started in 2019 and since then students, staff and school leaders have come together on a number of occasions to report on progress and share ideas.

Our work has been noted by the Department for Education and we were visited by Jonathan Dewsbury, the DfE's Chief Sustainability Officer in February. Jonathan met with BEP staff, Bristol City Council Climate Change leads and head teachers as well as visiting some BEP schools. Our work was subsequently recognised in the <u>DfE's Climate in Education Snapshot newsletter</u>.

At our most recent Climate Challenge conference in March 2023, schools reported on the commitments they had made at last year's event at City Hall. We were joined by Lucinda Furness of the Department for Education. Lucinda spoke about the <a href="DfE's Climate Change Strategy">DfE's Climate Change Strategy</a> and the implications for schools. She was keen to hear feedback from BEP students about progress at their schools to address the crisis.

We were also joined by Jo Taylor and Libby Bowles of <u>Sustainable Hive</u> who led a workshop to support students in achieving their goals, overcoming barriers and going further.

In May, in association with our partners at the University of Bristol School of Education, we held a workshop on *Climate Change Education across the Curriculum*, following up on an event on this topic last year.

We also held a Careers and Sustainability event in May, in partnership with the University of the West of England, to inform students about the wide range of careers in the green sector, the need for all jobs to take account of sustainability principles and the skills that will be needed in the world of work.

This Summer Update outlines the work that students and staff are doing across BEP schools as part of the <u>Climate Challenge Project</u> and the challenges they are facing. We are supported by a range of partner organisations, for which we are extremely grateful.

There is clearly more to do but we hope that you will be inspired by the commitment of students and staff in taking this important work forward.



trees to students

Planting native and fruit trees

Launching a uniform swap shop



Supporting schools' plans towards net zero

Working with staff on climate change education across the curriculum

> Informing students about sustainability and careers

## TOL FREE SC

Developing an Eco Garden

Looking into alternative energy provision

> Hosting a clothes recycling day



Developing a whole school Net Zero strategy

Installing EV charging points

Reducing food waste



Setting up a climate committee

Working on a biodiversity project

Planning an urban garden

Encouraging

active travel

Carrying out an

energy audit

education



Encouraging more

use of public transport

Trialling electric minibuses.

Expanding the

biodiversity garden

## **BEP CLIMATE** CHALLENGE UPDATE

Summer 2023



Raising awareness on the impact of climate change on Antarctica

> Exploring re-wilding possibilities

Investigating the potential for solar and wind power

Reducing food waste

Taking part in beach cleans to remove plastics

Developing biodiversity and doing conservation work



Exploring the barriers which prevent progress

Arranging meetings with senior leaders

> Organising a Clothes Swap













































# The DfE Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy

Lucinda Furness, of the Department for Education, gave a short presentation at our Climate Challenge event to inform students and staff about the DfE's Sustainability and Climate Change Education Strategy. The Unit was set up in 2021 and the DfE strategy was launched in 2022.

Young people were widely consulted in developing the strategy. The DfE is aware that the climate emergency adversely affects young people in particular and is keen to listen to their views to ensure that the strategy responds to their concerns. The Department will continue to engage with students to check that they understand and agree with the proposals.

The strategy was developed holistically – focusing on education and on school buildings and grounds. The main actions contained within it are to:

- set up a virtual nature education park that all schools can get involved with
- develop an awards scheme for students engaging with this work

The Department is aware of the challenges that schools are facing in terms of the move towards net zero and is therefore looking at the question of funding and the support that is needed to help them make the transition. Lucinda reported that the first net zero school has been opened and the aspiration is for more to follow.

The DfE is now looking to support and encourage schools to introduce climate action plans. The proposal is that all schools identify a sustainability lead who can lead on this work. Resources will be shared online by the DfE to provide information and support. Here are some useful links:

- <u>National Education Nature Park and Climate Action Awards Scheme | Natural History Museum (nhm.ac.uk)</u>: Updates on the Nature Park and Climate action awards scheme and what the next steps are
- <u>Communications from DfE's Sustainability and Climate Change Unit (office.com)</u>: The newsletter will have information on the youth engagement plan and opportunities for students

"It was great to hear from the students of Bristol and we're keen to continue to do so."

Lucinda Furness, Department for Education





### **Updates from BEP Schools**

#### **BRISTOL FREE SCHOOL**

Here is a summary of actions taken by the Eco club at Bristol Free School:

- Development of Eco Garden to include growing of seasonal food, wildflower meadow and biodiversity pond. We have secured investment from external providers for this.
- Our school finance team is looking into alternative energy provision, specifically solar panels on the school roof.
- We will be hosting a clothes recycling day where students bring in old uniform for swap/repair as well as using an external provider for clothes recycling.
- We will be holding an Eco Day in the Summer term with a focus on promoting sustainability within the wider curriculum and eco-friendly eating within the canteen.
- Our Eco committee is currently working with the national Young Green Briton Challenge project to mentor Year 7 students in developing solutions to environmental problems within the school and local community. Winning teams will be pitching their ideas at the House of Lords for investment in July.

#### **FAIRFIELD HIGH SCHOOL**

Here is a summary of what we have been doing since the meeting at City Hall last autumn:

- Our Ecoteam presented assemblies to the whole school on the Impacts of Climate Change on Antarctica to raise awareness about this
- We have introduced a project to recycle stationery to reduce landfill. This is in partnership with Terracycle and involves having recycling points in all classrooms and a central recycling point where each house can deposit their recycling.
- We have had a consultation with Avon Wildlife Trust to explore re-wilding possibilities on site. We intend to identify areas of our grounds to rewild to encourage biodiversity.
- We welcomed the Chief Sustainability Officer from the Department for Education to our school in February and discussed the new Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy with him, including our response to the strategy.
- We are exploring our site's potential for solar and wind power in response to the IPCC report of March 2023 identifying these two as the most effective mitigation strategies.
- We have a gardening club for students and teachers and a polytunnel which the local community have helped build. Covid put a delay on this, but we are hoping to resurrect this now as a community-supported project.



#### **CLIFTON HIGH SCHOOL**

At the BEP meeting in October 2022 our main pledges were:

- Encouraging Active Travel through Bikeability and bike maintenance
- Completing an energy audit at school
- Evolving the curriculum to include Climate Change Education in all subjects

This is what we have achieved so far:

Active Travel: we have done a student survey to assess what kinds of transport students are using to get to school and have found that the majority of students (over 300) travel to school by car. To try and reduce this number and increase the number of people travelling actively, the Eco Committee has developed an action plan which includes using the app Strava to create a competition between year groups to see who can walk or cycle the most. We have also discovered that a lot of people would like to cycle to school but can't for a variety of reasons. We have attempted to address these problems in various ways. For example, we have created the Golden Lock Competition where one person who cycles to school is selected at random every Wednesday to receive a prize from the Golden Box. In addition, to make it easier for people who cycle, we have introduced an emergency bicycle repair kit which is available in school for both staff and students to use. Dr Bike came into school earlier this year to carry out maintenance on students' bikes.

Energy: we have designed new signs for each classroom encouraging students and teachers to switch off lights, screens and projectors. We are planning to carry out spot checks on classrooms.

Curriculum: teachers have completed a survey about what climate change education is taught in their subjects. We are going to analyse these findings to see if we can encourage it to be included more.

One of the biggest challenges the Eco Committee faces is raising awareness across the school community. Through a notice board we share information and ideas and the board is regularly updated with energy and transport news.

Waste is a broad topic, and we have done a lot to tackle all aspects of it. Around the school, in every single classroom, there should be a green recycling bin (for plastic bottles, cans and cardboard) as well as a black recycling bin (for paper and magazines). After surveying the school classrooms, we realised that the majority of classrooms do not contain both of these bins so we are aiming to ensure all rooms are fitted with both. We have created signs to educate those who are unaware what materials go in which bins. Furthermore, we helped to design a new outdoor recycling bin, which we hope provides even more encouragement across the school to recycle. The Eco Committee has been working with the BEP representatives in the school to organise litter picks in Clifton, where pupils can take part to represent the school.

Last but not least, we have plans for a potential gardening club for all year groups in the senior school, working to increase biodiversity in the school grounds one small bit at a time. At a cake sale last term, we raised nearly £100 that was donated to Avon Needs Trees. The Eco Committee's next main aim is to evolve the curriculum to implement Eco and climate change topics throughout the subject areas.





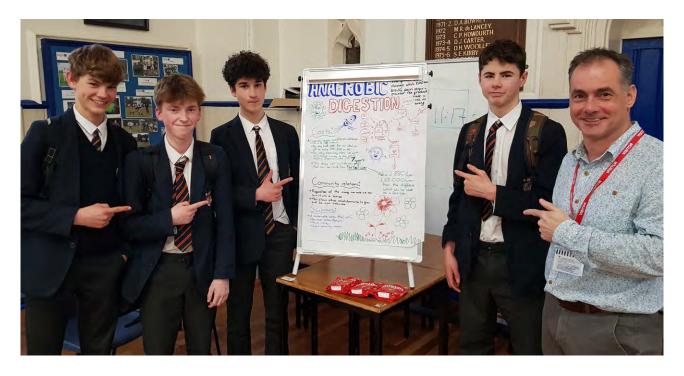
#### **QEH**

QEH is continuing to work hard to achieve another Eco-School Green Flag Award with distinction and we hope we're well on the way. We were honoured to receive the Eco-Schools National Award for our marine and plastics work and our Eco-Group continues to meet weekly, with speakers and members of staff joining us to develop our projects.

We are continuing to make progress with our former waste, biodiversity and marine environment projects. Our Greening Classrooms project has been rolled out to over 35 classrooms and our Junior School is now involved. We continue with biodiversity and conservation work at our sports ground in Failand. Our Dining Room Committee continues to help reduce food waste, with a pilot project to change our Meat-Free Monday to another day in the week (in secret) to see the effect. We continue to work with the Marine Conservation Trust to survey and remove plastics through beach cleans.

Our three themes for this academic year now concentrate on **Energy, School Grounds and Litter**. Our Spring School Eco-Week, focused on the theme of **energy**. All year groups had an eco-focused enrichment afternoon, with a trip to an Energy Recovery Plant for Year 7 students, an energy efficiency competition for Year 8, a litter survey and litter pick for Year 9 and an afternoon Net Zero project for Year 10 students. With an expert guest speaker on energy, the school had various presentations and activities focused on energy over the course of the week.

**Litter** is being addressed through a strategy whereby a small group of Year 8 students litter pick each week. Our Year 9s and 10s take part in beach cleans over the year. The Eco-Group have also expressed their views about litter picking at school as part of the discussion on student sanctions.





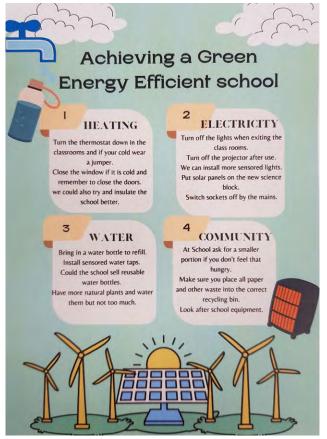
For our third theme, **school grounds**, our Eco-Reps are involved with our Estates Department to develop a small green pocket of the school into a Sanctuary Space for students and staff alike to enjoy. We are also making our Upper Science Yard a greener place to enjoy sitting in.

As part of our school Eco-Week, we have been running a Strava Challenge to encourage students and staff to walk, cycle or run to school, with prizes for the 'QEH Big Energy Save cyclist, runner and walker.' We have a stationery amnesty underway to encourage staff to pool their resources and we are reminding everyone in the school community to switch-off lights, projectors and devices to reduce our energy consumption through our Year 8 poster competition.

Finally, the Sustainability Team has been reminding all students, through assemblies and presentations, of the importance of our work, with a focus on energy and the challenge of reaching Net Zero emissions. We hope through our enrichment work in particular during this week to progress towards reducing our overall carbon footprint at the school.









#### **ORCHARD SCHOOL**

What we've been doing. We have:

- Given free fruit trees to school students which were donated by Bristol Council.
- Planted more native and fruit trees in the school garden and wildlife area.
- Maintained the school garden and wildlife area, upgrading the pond environment and preparing the garden for Spring
- Weekly student litter picking enrichment group

#### Coming up...

- Launch of Uniform Swap Shop, with students donating their unwanted clothes and other students ordering any uniform they need. This student-led initiative will wash, dry, fold and donate clothes to students who want and need them, reducing waste and money spent.
- Introducing the WildED programme focussed on increasing biodiversity at our school.
- Rewilding the sports fields by only cutting grass in the areas we need to use for lessons and fixtures.





#### **CLIFTON COLLEGE**

Five proposals were identified by students and presented to college leaders in January.

#### Improving the recycling provision

We aim to provide new recycling bins around the college site. The suggestion is to run a house competition next term, for day and boarding houses, on the amount of recycling generated, with a prize for the winning house. The detail now needs to be worked up.

We have a separate idea for a House Sustainability Award which would be given out annually to the house that has made the best effort and/or come up with the best idea that has been put into practice.

#### Travel

We have budgeted for the Home Runner App for the start of September 23. Money has also been put aside for the next financial year for more and improved bicycle storage for those who cycle to college.

#### **EV Charging Points and electric minibuses**

Budget has been requested for the new financial year for some charging points. We are investigating renewing our fleet of minibuses to include electric vehicles for local journeys. There are two in particular that could be changed, as they're not currently compliant with the Bristol clean air zone.

#### **Energy Usage and Carbon Reduction**

We are about to commission an ESOS assessment (this is a report that we have to generate for the Government). This will give us lots of information on energy usage and provide ideas for ways we can reduce consumption. It'll give us some targets to aim for, which the students can then help brainstorm on how to achieve and help lead. We are also investigating working with an external provider to help with carrying out a carbon audit and developing a future strategy.

#### Food waste and lower carbon diets

Sodexo, the college caterers, are working on an internal campaign on reducing waste.

The students have written up two separate student policy documents on which the school will draw on to inform their Net Zero strategy.

#### Other actions by the College

- A formalised Net Zero target to be identified
- Sustainability to be one of the new plinths of college structure and core strategy. This embeds sustainability into college decision making at a strategic level.
- A new Sustainability Committee includes key stakeholders across college and representatives from the student body.





#### **COTHAM SCHOOL**

The group which came to the event in October presented their views and objectives to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). We then set up an all-years Cotham Climate Committee. The current group are going to present to the Committee to hand this work over for taking forward. Meanwhile, we are also working on a project with Avon Wildlife Trust.

The group will then be presenting again to SLT with the aim of setting some green objectives for the school. We are aiming to apply for funding for a school improvement project. Our plan is to develop an urban garden within school.



## REDMAIDS' HIGH SCHOOL Travel and Transport

• With regard to transport, we need to encourage more use of public transport and coaches to and from school. However, this is not just a matter for the school as it involves public transport and coach providers too. Some of the vehicles on our school site are becoming electric, for instance the caretaker's mini buggy, and we are in the process of trialling electric minibuses. Bikeability training has recently been completed with some Year 7 students to encourage cycling to school.

#### **Biodiversity**

Our plan is to expand the Biodiversity
Garden into further areas on the school site
next year. Students have cleared an area in
readiness to sow seeds and plant a variety
of plants.









#### **COLLEGIATE**

- We discussed barriers which prevented the development of our climate challenge work and came to the conclusion that there is not enough student involvement and there is a disconnect between the Green Ambassadors and the Senior Management Team.
- We thought this was partly because students are so busy, but also that they are not engaged enough in the climate change agenda.
- To combat this, we plan to add incentives to Green Ambassador meetings, mirroring other groups.
- We also thought of implementing regular meetings for the Green Ambassadors, as well as regular meetings between us and the Senior Management Team.
- We realised that we must follow up on the last meeting with the Head for further progress to be made.
- To raise more awareness for our Clothes Swap in the summer term, we plan on doing an assembly with Avon Wildlife Trust.





# Achieving goals, exploring barriers and going further

At the March 2023 Climate Challenge event, Jo Taylor and Libby Bowles of Sustainable Hive asked students to discuss the barriers they are facing in achieving their goals, and their aspirations for their schools' climate change commitments.

Here are some of the challenges and barriers identified by students:

- Raising awareness across school communities about the climate emergency
- Reaching all staff and students and letting them know what they can do
- Lack of desire by people to get involved
- Lack of understanding
- Fear of change
- Pressure of work; lack of time, with teachers and students feeling overloaded and therefore not prioritising this agenda
- Budget, money concerns how can schools pay for the changes needed?
- Involving senior leaders on an ongoing basis (due to the many demands on their time)
- Challenges for teachers in incorporating climate issues into their lessons
- Making environmental choices the popular option
- Finding the right suppliers and building environmental priorities into contracts
- Lack of compassion/empathy/understanding about the crisis
- Climate anxiety people feeling they can't do anything that will actually make a difference

Once the main barriers had been identified, the groups worked together to smash through them, exploring the reasons for these blocks and discussing strategies to help unlock new paths to success.

Students discussed new strategies including:

- using fun and positive environmental messaging
- introducing "eco by stealth"
- organising takeover days
- involving senior leaders
- finding funding
- working with empathy for those who feel climate anxiety or who feel overloaded.

Students reviewed their plans and suggested strategies to try to help move their ambitions forward. This discussion helped them to motivate each other to aim higher and reignited their excitement for their plans.





# Climate Change Education across the Curriculum

Teachers from a number of BEP schools came together at an event at the University of Bristol in May to discuss the progress that they are making in integrating climate change education into the curriculum. This event, organised in collaboration with our partners in the School of Education at the University, was a follow-up to an event in 2022 which kickstarted this collaborative work.

There is clear demand from students to learn more about our warming planet, decreasing biodiversity and the skills they will need in the future to tackle the emergency and develop new technologies. Some schools are carrying out a curriculum review to explore ways of weaving climate change and environmental issues through the years and the subjects in order to give young people a holistic understanding of the theme.

We were joined by Rachel Musson of <u>ThoughtBox Education</u> who shared her ideas on the topic and spoke about the need for teachers to have courageous conversations with young people, many of whom feel bewildered and fearful about the crisis.

Caroline Kiegler-Devine of the DfE Sustainability and Climate Change Unit also contributed to the event, sharing progress concerning the DfE's strategy. Teachers had the opportunity to ask questions of her. The majority thought that the DfE should make Climate Change Education mandatory to ensure that children didn't miss out on covering this critical area, and to raise its profile and







importance above multiple competing demands in schools. There was also a sense that the DfE could usefully facilitate a discussion on what a curriculum for climate change education might look like, bringing together key people who are working in the field. Teachers were concerned about the lack of funding for schools to undertake this work, and Caroline left with some clear messages to take back to colleagues in the DfE.

A number of climate ambassadors from Climate Outreach, who are conducting research into aspects of climate change at the University of Bristol, participated in the meeting to share their work and to offer their support to schools. Clearly it is valuable for school teachers and academic researchers to collaborate to help ensure young people are kept abreast of latest developments in the field, supporting high quality, robust climate change education.

Dr Nicola Warren-Lee, who facilitated the meeting on behalf of the School of Education, ran a workshop for teachers on the <u>Climate Classrooms Project</u> and Michelle Graffagnino from the School of Education and Kirsty Hammond from the BS13 project spoke about <u>Climate Craftivism</u> as a way of enabling young people to participate in climate change conversations and projects. These projects are funded by the <u>Cabot Institute for the Environment</u> and the <u>Brigstow Institute</u> respectively and we are looking into the potential for further funding in order to continue our climate change education work with Bristol schools.

There is demand from teachers who participated in this workshop to continue with this collaborative work and a further event is to be organised later in the year.





# Food Sustainability within Bristol Education Partnership

Food is one of the five main areas that schools are tackling as part of the BEP Climate Challenge Project and it is being addressed in different ways in different settings. Some partner schools are focusing on what they can grow in their school grounds; others are looking at how they can change the offer in their school cafeterias to reduce the amount of meat eaten and introduce more locally grown produce. Some schools are tackling the question of food waste and how this can be reduced.

Working in partnership with the <u>Sustainable Food Trust</u> and the <u>Harmony Project</u>, school chefs, catering managers, Food Technology leads and some students were invited to a BEP Roundtable event in February to explore the potential for schools to source healthy, nutritious, seasonal and locally produced foods within their catering budgets, as well as discussing the barriers to change. How students learn about food through the curriculum and through mealtimes was also discussed.

We were joined by Patrick Holden, organic farmer and food campaigner, Richard Dunne of The Harmony Project, Catherine Withers of Yew Tree Farm and Bonnie Welch of the Sustainable Food Trust. The main questions discussed were:

- How can lunch menus help schools to reach net zero targets in Bristol?
- What challenges do schools face in sourcing nutritious and locally sourced foods?
- How might schools overcome these barriers?
- How can school leaders implement change in their school kitchens?
- What do local food producers have to offer school kitchens?
- How might schools integrate curriculum learning about the 'story of our food' into mealtimes and the food they serve in the school canteen or dinner hall?
- How can schools introduce a percentage of organic food / food from regenerative systems into their offer?









A lot of ground was covered in the session and some of the key points made concerned procurement and food education. Whether it's at school, work or at home, we all need to support the transition towards local, sustainable and resilient food systems, if we're to leave the planet in a habitable state for future generations. Healthy food is on our doorstep and there are models that work in terms of food sourcing, and we should look to those for inspiration. Reducing waste is also crucial.

All students need to learn about food and its provenance. Messages around sustainable food systems need to be taught from a young age and it is important to engage with staff and parents as well as students.

#### First/next steps for schools

Steps that schools can take towards improving food provision were discussed. Here are some suggestions:

- 1. Start by assessing what food and farming education is already on offer at your school. Are these lessons / messages reflected in the school kitchens?
- 2. Have a conversation with your wholesale provider to see whether they have existing links with local food producers.
- 3. Start small. Pick an ingredient / food group that could be sourced locally (and sustainably. If this item is only available seasonally, think about how it might be frozen and used throughout the rest of the school year.
- 4. Build relationships with farmers / growers who can supply this food product and encourage them to visit the school to meet with staff and students.
- 5. Collaborate with colleagues to discuss ideas and menu plans.
- 6. Inform and engage students and parents in the process.

This event was well attended with most partner schools participating. It is being followed up with a Sustainable Lunch, to be cooked by some BEP students with renowned local chef, Barny Haughton of the Square Food Foundation in June. The focus of this event will be on how schools can move towards a more local, seasonal, healthy and sustainable offer.





## BEP

### Careers and Sustainability

Students from all BEP schools were invited to an event at the University of West of England's Business and Conference Centre in May to explore a wide range of careers that have a sustainability focus.

Professor Jim Longhurst, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Environment and Sustainability at UWE welcomed everyone to the event and outlined the many ways in which the university is embedding sustainability at the core of its work. He made the point that, given the scale of the crisis we are facing, all jobs need to be underpinned by sustainable principles. The university is working hard to ensure that all of their courses include this element so that students are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed in the world of work.

Several UWE students spoke about what sustainability means to them and how their courses were equipping them to understand how sustainability was an integral part of their area of interest.

BEP school students had the opportunity to attend a range of workshops on the following themes:

- Inspiring Sustainability in the School of Engineering
- Eco House
- Sustainability in Nursing and Midwifery
- Careers in Wildlife
- The World of Ethical Finance
- Law and Sustainability

The sessions were all inspiring and many students commented on the fact that their eyes had been opened to different career options that they had not even considered previously.

Students had the opportunity to go on a tour of the university grounds to witness first hand how sustainability and biodiversity are at the heart of UWE's operations. Each school was given a sapling tree to take back and plant in their own school's grounds as a reminder of the day and of the need to keep the idea of sustainability at the front of our minds. Students were tasked with reporting on their experience of the day and sharing it with others back at their own schools.





### **Final Words**



Lots of progress is being made across Bristol Education Partnership with students at all partner schools taking a leading role in tackling the climate emergency. Whilst young people are aware of the challenges and the barriers in progressing their work, they are actively looking at ways of overcoming these in imaginative ways. But there is clearly much more to do, and they cannot, and should not, be expected to do this on their own.

Alongside the students' ongoing work, BEP's collaboration with the School of Education at the University of Bristol in supporting schools to introduce climate change education across the curriculum is proving valuable to all who are involved. Instead of reinventing the wheel, staff from partner schools can share ideas and approaches in taking this work forward. Linking classroom practice with research in this area is certainly helpful for teachers in an area where the vast majority have not received any training. This work too will continue.

A further, and more recent, strand of work is building on our concern with food provision and education. Food affects us all, and supporting schools to introduce more locally produced, sustainably farmed, seasonal and nutritious food benefits whole school communities as well as local businesses. But it is not straightforward and having the support of the Sustainable Food Trust and The Harmony Project is helping those in schools who have responsibility for this area to think deeply about the kinds of changes that are needed.

The value of schools meeting together to discuss progress and plans for the future is clear. Through discussion and collaboration students and staff draw on each other's ideas and this helps with building motivation, creating a shared sense of purpose, and providing an added impetus for change.

Bristol City Council is a leader in tackling the climate emergency having committed to reaching Net Zero by 2030. Bristol Education Partnership schools, their staff and their young people are playing an important part in contributing to and progressing this agenda.

Our work is being recognised nationally, and BEP was delighted to be visited by Jonathan Dewsbury, Chief Sustainability Officer for the Department for Education in February. The final words of this Update go to Jonathan.

Keep up the good work BEP!

Fiona Carnie
BEP Project Lead

"Bristol is clearly doing some inspirational stuff and it has given me lots to challenge back at DfE about our approaches. I learnt so much and had some great conversations."

Jonathan Dewsbury, Chief Sustainability Officer, Department for Education

