

## Written evidence from the Department for Education (CCG0007)

### 1. What does DfE see as its role in the preparations for COP26?

The COP26 President Designate, Alok Sharma has written to the Education Secretary setting out DfE's role in the lead up to and during COP26. These include:

- I. **Profiling England as a trail blazer on climate education.** To demonstrate leadership on the world stage. We are currently exploring what a climate policy and programme package could look like.
- II. **Official and Ministerial level stakeholder engagement with UK youth organisations** to galvanise support and ensure alignment with COP26 policy priorities and communications campaigns. We will showcase teachers and pupils who are leading climate action initiatives and work to secure buy-in from primary school senior leaders and unions.
- III. **Work in partnership with the Cabinet Office and other Government Departments to plan and deliver a high-level event as part of the 'Youth & Empowerment Day' on the first Friday of COP26.** This is a UNFCCC mandated day and will provide a space for championing climate education, public participation and meaningful youth engagement on climate action. The event will complement the UNFCCC *Action for Climate Empowerment* negotiations (which will agree text on education and public empowerment).

### 2. What actions is the department taking to ensure a COP26 package can be agreed?

The DfE is working to ensure the UK is showcased as a world leader in the education sector. We are working closely with colleagues across Whitehall, particularly the COP26 committee, and consulting widely with a range of stakeholders and international partners, including non-governmental organisations.

### 3. How is the department factoring climate change (i) mitigation and (ii) adaption into its policy decisions?

DfE has recently established a Sustainability and Climate Change Unit to co-ordinate and drive activity across the Department and our sectors and is currently preparing a Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy.

The DfE sustainability strategy is likely to centre on four strategic aims, with education as a thread through all: 1) Net Zero by 2050, 2) Resilient to Climate Change, 3) A better environment for future generations, and 4) Citizens connected to nature. Each outcome will cover each of our sectors

(Early Years, Schools, Further Education, Higher Education, Children Social Care) as well as the organisation itself and its ALBs.

DfE is reviewing how climate risks are captured in the investment management process. We are planning to recruit an environmental analyst/scientist to review business cases and make sure decision makers in the department are aware of the environmental impact of new policies and major programmes.

DfE has recently established a Sustainability and Climate Change Unit to co-ordinate and drive activity across the Department and our sectors and is currently preparing a Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy to launch for targeted consultation between November 2021 and January 2022. Following targeted consultation and analysis of the evidence and desired outcomes from DfE's sectors the strategy will be formally published in April 2022. This will be the starting point of a programme of change in guidance, policy and communications to lead and coordinate the education sector towards our net zero targets and a more resilient education estate.

The strategy, as agreed with the Secretary of State, will be underpinned by four strategic aims, with education as a thread through all: 1) Excellence in Education and skills for a changing world, 2) Achieving Net Zero by 2050, 3) Resilience to Climate Change, and 3) A better environment for future generations. Each outcome will cover each of our sectors (Early Years, Schools, Further Education, Higher Education, Children Social Care) as well as the organisation itself and its ALBs.

To ensure sustainability is embedded throughout our operations, DfE is reviewing how climate risks are captured in the investment management process. We are in the process of recruiting dedicated sustainability experts to support this work, which will include reviewing business cases and make sure decision makers in the department are aware of the environmental impact of new policies and major programmes, and particularly how these policies and programmes contribute to better climate change mitigation and adaptation.

**4. What does the department consider to be the biggest challenges related to climate change mitigation and adaptation that fall within its remit, and how the department plans to address those challenges.**

There are a number of specific, key challenges including;

- i. Ensuring the education estate contributes to net zero targets and is more resilient to climate change.

We need to support the education estate to help meet the Government's target to achieve net zero carbon by 2050. This means addressing energy use and carbon emissions across the c.22,000 schools in England, with

c.64,000 blocks, as well as making those buildings more resilient to future climate impacts. As well as working with other education estates in the early years, further education, and higher education sector to make sure they are prepared for a changing world.

The department supports sustainability through our capital funding and programmes, to reduce carbon and save schools money on energy. We recognise the need to contribute to reducing carbon and increasing resilience to climate change both through delivering new school buildings, and improving the existing school estate.

The new ten-year school rebuilding programme announced by the Prime Minister in June, launched with a commitment to 500 rebuilding projects over the next decade. This will replace poor condition and ageing school buildings with modern, energy efficient designs – more resilient to future climate change. This builds on the existing Priority School Building Programme, which has been replacing or refurbishing buildings at over 500 schools across England.

In addition, since 2015, the department has allocated £11.3 billion to maintain and improve the condition of school buildings, including improving energy efficiency. This includes committing £1.8 billion in the current financial year 2021-22.

The Further Education (FE) Capital Transformation Fund delivers the government's £1.5 billion commitment to upgrade the estate of both FE colleges and designated institutions in England. This will target colleges in the worst condition whilst supporting the government's objectives on achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

Alongside this substantial investment in the school and FE estate, we have provided schools and those responsible for school and college buildings with guidance on energy efficiency, such as minimising energy, water and waste within our Good Estate Management for Schools guidance.

Additionally, the Department has set environmental standards for centrally delivered new schools, through a performance-based specification. All other delivered school construction projects, not related to the Department, must meet building regulation requirements for energy performance. The specification is reviewed on a regular basis and the next major revision is due in Autumn 2021 and will minimise energy demand and consumption in operation.

More broadly, the department will continue to work with colleagues across government on carbon reduction and energy efficiency, such as working with BEIS on the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. The department has been testing approaches to building more sustainable school buildings through our existing capital programmes, and will continue to develop thinking on how future capital programmes can contribute further.

ii. Skills for the green economy

To ensure we have the skilled workforce to support climate change mitigation and adaptation, deliver net zero and our Ten Point Plan, we have launched the Green Jobs Taskforce, working in partnership with business, skills providers, and unions, to help us develop plans for new, long-term and good quality green jobs by 2030 and advise what support is needed for people in transitioning industries.

The Taskforce is co-chaired by Minister Trevelyan (BEIS) and Minister Keegan (DfE), and forms a crucial part of the government's ambitious Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution and our wider work to net zero.

The Taskforce will assess how the UK jobs market and the skills sector should adapt to support net zero, developing ideas and solutions for how the UK can deliver the green jobs of the future. The Taskforce will conclude its work in Summer 2021, developing a set of independent recommendations to advise Government and Industry on green skills and support for workers in transitioning industries.

Through linking up with BEIS, DWP, DEFRA and OGDs, we have a number of options at our disposal to ensure that people in the UK are able to develop the green skills required to deliver net zero.

We have the programmes in place now, such as those referenced in the *Skill for Jobs* White Paper – including Apprenticeships, Skills Bootcamps, Traineeships and T Levels to help us grow future talent pipelines and deliver the skilled individuals we will need. And the Lifetime Skills Guarantee will help people train and retrain at any stage of their lives and so develop the skills most valued by employers.

With help from the Taskforce, we will ensure that these programmes can be directed to support the net zero agenda, and to identify where the evidence tells us we might need to go further or faster.

iii. Preparing a generation that will have to live and work in a world affected by climate change.

Through the development of our Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy we will explore how we can best prepare this generation for the world in which they will live.

DfE officials are holding a series of workshops throughout September with our key stakeholders in the early years, schools, further education and higher education and children's social care sector to accelerate our understanding of the sectors concerns around how we prepare a generation for a changing world.

In addition to this the Secretary of State is holding a roundtable with youth organisations in mid-September and Baroness Berridge is holding a round table with key peers to understand the best approach for preparing young people to live and work in a world affected by climate change.

**5. What assessment has the department made of the costs and benefits of those plans?**

In developing ideas for the sustainability and climate change strategy we will be carrying out a formal assessment of ideas and plans over the next 9 months. As previously stated, we are planning to recruit an environmental analyst/scientist who will also support this work.

As part of our Spending Review bid to Treasury we have undertaken some initial assessment of the cost and benefit analysis of delivering our Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy. However, we are planning to run targeted consultation on our strategy between November 2021 and January 2022. Following this consultation, we will use the recently recruited environmental analysts and scientists to formally assess the proposed outcomes and solutions so that there is clear cost benefit ratio for DfE's interventions and funding, that will be instigated from April 2022.