

Children and young people's views on The London Plan: climate change

Report for the Greater London Authority

Lucy Read, NCB



Children and young people's views on The London Plan: climate change – report for the Greater London Authority

Contents	Page
Background and acknowledgements	3
Introduction	4
Children and Young people's recommendations:	
• Children and young people's views on what London will look like in 2020	5 -7
• What children and young people think they can do to tackle climate change	8 - 10
• What children and young people think their schools and colleges can do to tackle climate change	11 -13
• What children and young people think the Mayor of London can do to tackle climate change	14 - 16
• Intergenerational issues and climate change	16
• The London Plan children and young people's views	17 - 20
Conclusion	20

Background

This report sets out the views of children and young people on further alterations to The London Plan around climate change. Their views were sought by the National Children's Bureau on behalf of the Greater London Authority.

The consultations aimed to explore children and young people's views in relation to the London Plan and the collective roles we all play in slowing down climate change.

Acknowledgements

We would like to say a special thank you to all the children and young people that have taken part in the consultations and the staff that helped organise the events. The consultations would not have been possible without the help of staff at both the Greater London Authority and NCB, particularly Adriana Byrne who helped carry out the four consultations.

Listening to the voices of children and young people on The London Plan: climate change for the Greater London Authority

Introduction

This is the report from the National Children's Bureau on a series of consultation events held with children and young people on further alterations to The London Plan around climate change.

The National Children's Bureau carried out four consultation events with children and young people on behalf of the Greater London Authority. Groups were recruited from a variety of settings throughout greater London: Brent, Welling, East Ham and Purley.

The following criteria were used in selecting the schools and groups:

1. To have a range of children and young people throughout London to take part
2. To reflect a broad range of ages (8 – 18 years)
3. To include a range of communities
4. To include diverse groups of children and young people
5. To reflect the range of levels of children and young people's involvement.

Sessions and activities were adapted to suit the needs of the children and young people who took part.

A total of 67 children and young people were consulted. Of this total 27 were boys and young men, and 40 were girls and young women. Using monitoring statistics, 12 of the children and young people were identified as having a disability or additional needs.

The consultations elicited lively, interesting and inspiring discussions around the London Plan, climate change and what children and young people think can be done to slow down climate change. The children and young people really engaged with the topic and reported to have enjoyed the opportunity to talk about the challenging issue of climate change.

What did we talk about?

Sessions gave children and young people the opportunity to discuss the new amendments to the London Plan on climate change, expressing their ideas, priorities and concerns. Each session was designed in a creative way to engage a diverse group of children and young people.

Children and young people's recommendations:

Most of the children and young people we spoke to had a good understanding and awareness of the importance of climate change and the measures needed to slow it down.

Discussions highlighted a strong feeling from children and young people that climate change is an issue that they feel passionately about and one in which they want to be part of the solution.

Children and young people's views on what London will look like in 2020:

As a scene setting activity the participants were asked to imagine that a U.F.O had landed in London in the year 2020. Children and young people were asked to think about how they would best explain to an alien what London looks like, thinking about some of the following:

- Is London in 2020 a nice place to live?
- Has climate change been stopped or has London changed?
- Has climate change been slowed down or sped up?
- Do we live in London 'heaven' or London 'hell'?

When asked to describe London in 2020 many of the children and young people spoke eloquently about the contrasting picture of the London in which we could live.

London 'Heaven':

Children and young people described a London heaven as a city in which they would be proud to live and work in, a city in which climate change had been slowed down. Many of the groups also described how a London heaven would attract more tourists and prosperity to the area.

“By 2020 everyone will realise that they have to cut down on pollution.”

“It will be clean and there will be more public facilities”

“More buildings and cars will be eco-friendly”

“More recycling, less deforestation and cars that will run on water”

“Buying local produce rather than getting food from abroad - wastes energy and pollutes air travelling”

“Tourism will be increased due to the changes made”.

“Solar panels and wind turbines on roofs”

“Shops will be more hygienic, streets will be clean, and the population will be more friendly”

Children and young people however were clear that their vision of a London heaven would only be possible if drastic action is taken now to slow down climate change. Children and young people’s suggestions centred on finding and investing in alternative sources of energy; better education on climate change; and making recycling more accessible and easier to do.

“The Mayor should spend money and time on climate change”

“People need to be given more information that shows them what they can do to slow climate change down”

“Look at new ways to create energy and ways to supply water so London might be cleaner”

“Find new alternatives to petrol”

Many of the groups talked about how recycling should be made compulsory with associated fines for failure to comply.

“Only one set of bins for the whole community. Make sure people don’t have NO choice but to recycle”

“Recycling rubbish should be compulsory and you get fined if you don’t”

Some of the older young people who took part described that the climate change debate needs to be moved beyond just talking and start leading to positive action.

“People need to stop shouting about the same things for year’s e.g. polar ice caps”

“Let more people understand, hold campaigns, let the older and the more powerful people understand me and understand that there needs to be change now”

London Hell:

Children and young people felt passionately that if climate change continues London will be a horrible place to live and work in 2020. Many of the groups created a vision of a London hell encompassing the damaging and negative effects of climate change.

"If London keeps on changing London will be a nasty place to live in"

"There will be more cars, more congestion causing pollution causing global warming"

"Streets will not be clean, shops will be unhygienic, there will be more litter and houses will be old and contain mice and rats. Boilers, waterworks and drain blockages. More dustbin cleaners"

"Some of the small parks may not be here"

"Climate change will be sped up because there are more factories and more pollution. More deforestation. This will happen due to gas change in the atmosphere"

"Climate change won't be able to stop as quickly because London will be overcrowded in 2020 there will be more pollution than 2007"

Some children and young people however struggled with the challenging concept that some of the negative effects of climate change they also considered to be positive:

"I'm happy that it is warmer in November, saves money on heating"

"Countries like Poland and Russia will be thankful it's getting warmer"

What children and young people think they can do to tackle climate change:

The children and young people we spoke to raised three common ways in which they felt they could individually help to tackle climate change. These ideas centred around:

- Recycling more
- Saving energy, waste and water
- Growing or buying locally organically produced food

“Think about ways that I am polluting and explore ways which I can save energy and recycle e.g.

- **Not leaving water running when not in use e.g. brushing teeth and doing washing up**
- **Turning of electricity when not in use e.g. computers & light bulbs**
- **Recycle**
- **Walk instead of using cars**
- **Eat organic”**

Views on Recycling:

Our discussions with children and young people highlighted recycling as an area that children and young people felt strongly that they should and could be doing more.

Children and young people spoke about how they would like to recycle more in school, at home and whilst out and about. However, they felt that the process of recycling is not made easy by the facilities currently provided.

“Government should make it simpler to recycle and there should be more collections and actually pick it up”

“Give members of the public more ways to recycle”

Children and young people identified that recycling is currently too difficult. Groups discussed that recycling could be made easier if the range of items that can be recycled are extended; that bins at home, on the streets and schools have greater capacity to recycle more items.

Children and young people also discussed that recycling should be extended to buying and donating more to charity shops and that new items purchased should be kinder to the environment.

“Make use of charity shops and second hand items”

“Borrow/lend/share with others rather than buying brand new”

“Replace appliances with energy efficient ones when they break”

“Buy more natural clothes e.g. using organic cotton”

Views on Saving energy, waste and water:

Many of the children and young people we spoke to felt they already work hard to save energy, waste and water.

“I switch of the lights when not in the room”

“Don’t turn the heating on when unnecessary”

“Walk rather than cause pollution”

“Use a water butt to save water”

“Follow what educated (Sic) people do:

- Turn standby buttons off**
- Use energy efficient light bulbs”**

Children and young people believed however that excessive waste is created from packaging and food that is not eaten. Suggestions for how this could be overcome centred around:

“Only buy food you need”

“Buy products that have less packaging”

“Do not buy things that are wasteful”

“Don’t buy products that you are less likely to use”

“Think of new meals that combine our leftovers”

Children and young people also touched on the idea that they could help the environment more by utilising other methods of transport to reduce carbon emissions.

“Walk and cycle instead of using cars and buses”

“We use less energy by walking instead of driving a car”

“Take less holidays abroad”

Whilst young people did recognise the importance of being more energy efficient and kinder to the environment some of the young people struggled with this idea when this thinking was applied to their lives. Several young people could identify for example many ways of saving energy by switching televisions, DVD, radios off rather than keeping them on stand by. But young people when asked about items that they used regularly, found it difficult to apply a similar logic, for example, one young person said:

“There’s no way I would cut the hours I play on my Xbox”

Views on growing or buying locally organically produced food:

Discussions with children and young people highlighted a belief that adults should grow and buy locally produced food.

“Grow as much of your own food as possible to reduce the travel and pollution caused during transporting the food”

“Buy local produce”

“Eat food grown in this country”

What children and young people think their schools and colleges can do to tackle climate change:

The children and young people we spoke to raised three common ways in which they felt their school could help to tackle climate change. These ideas were similar to what they thought they could do individually and centred around:

- Recycling more
- Saving energy, waste and water
- Education

Views on Recycling:

Children and young people felt that more schools should become recycling champions, with more recycling bins and recycling centres in school grounds.

Groups believed that schools and colleges who fail to recycle should have it imposed upon them.

“Recycle all paper and only use books/notepads from recycled paper”

“Provide food bins for organic waste”

“Buy a compost bin”

The sessions and activities also highlighted that schools and colleges should do more to stop pupils dropping litter on school grounds. Groups felt that this would help pupils understand the importance of keeping the environment tidy and recycling.

“Clean the playgrounds, ours has loads of rubbish in it”

“My school can make more people do litter duty to get it looking better so there is less litter”

“Have recycling bins around where normal bins would be”

Views on Saving energy, waste and water:

Across all groups there was a strong feeling that schools and colleges are not active enough at saving energy. Many children and young people discussed that it should be expected that schools and colleges try to save energy, recycle waste and conserve water.

In discussions children and young people stressed that schools could save energy if the design of its buildings were more energy efficient, for example with the utilisation of solar panels, wind turbines and outdoor green spaces.

“School buildings should be more eco friendly like City Hall”

Children and young people highlighted that lighting in rooms should be switched off during the day and when not in use. It was also felt that computers and appliances should be shut down over night.

Groups also discussed that schools and colleges should utilise the green space available to them in educating pupils.

“Make better use of its grounds e.g. bird tables, feeders, grow some food or even herbs for food technology department”

“Plant trees and plants that produce fruit and veg to be used in the school cooking for school dinners and any not used should be used for jam-making”

“Help children learn about planting and make them understand climate change”

It was generally felt that transport to and from school was a big problem on a number of levels.

Most of the children and young people we spoke to felt that transport to and from school was a big problem on a number of levels.

Many of the children and young people we spoke to described the chaos caused when parents, carers pick up and drop off pupils from outside the school gates. Groups spoke about how school pickups cause unnecessary pollution as many cars only have one or two pupils in them.

Children and young people also discussed how they are put at risk because they cannot see to cross the road.

“We should try and stop the traffic outside our school by”

“Charge for parking at school gates”

Children and young people felt that if schools could provide safer places to store bikes then more pupils would ride to school. Groups also discussed that cycling safety should form a part of PE.

“Provide space in the bike shed to give the option of cycling to school, and encourage it”

“There should be bike sheds so people can cycle to school, people shouldn’t have to worry about their bike being nicked!”

“Teach pupils a cycling proficiency test”

One of the groups described a successful initiative called a walking school bus where adults pick up, lead and collect pupils to and from school.

A number of the groups also discussed how teaching staff should live locally.

“Only employ staff that live locally so either cycle or walk to work, unless they use public transport”

“Recruit teachers coming from areas within one mile”

What children and young people think the Mayor of London can do to tackle climate change:

The children and young people we spoke to raised four common ways in which they felt the Mayor could help to tackle climate change. These ideas similarly centred around:

- Recycling
- Building more energy efficient buildings
- Saving energy, waste and water
- Education

All groups felt that the Mayor has an important role to play in “pushing the green idea”.

Recycling:

Children and young people felt strongly that recycling should be a priority issue for the mayor. Groups discussed that recycling should no longer be optional but compulsory.

“Make people recycle”

“Give members of the public more ways to recycle”

“Pass laws on recycling: things such as newspapers should have to be from 100% recycled paper”

“Put recycling bins next to litter bins so people can separate what is recyclable”

Children and young people discussed that rubbish on the streets of London is a major problem. Groups felt that the Mayor should spend time and money cleaning London up in the form of road sweepers and fines for litter dropping.

Discussion were also had around supermarkets and packaging. Children and young people identified that supermarkets currently create lots of excess waste. Groups felt that the Mayor should set an example in this area by creating strict laws that force supermarkets to think green. Children and young people expressed the following ideas:

“Enforce packaging laws, standards to reduce unnecessary packaging”

“Create laws to ensure all supermarkets charge people for plastic carrier bags because it is wasteful when these get thrown away”

“Subsidies local produce. Encourage people to buy local food”

“Encourage wide range of food production in local areas”

Building more energy efficient buildings:

A priority in all groups for children and young people was the idea that buildings should be better planned and energy efficient. Groups discussed that they would like to see the Mayor convert old buildings to be kinder to the environment and new buildings to be energy efficient from the start.

“Stop buildings being built without having solar panels and wind turbines”

“Better planned buildings”

“Stop people building unnecessary buildings e.g. shopping malls”

“Buildings should be more eco friendly like City Hall. I think the Mayor is doing a good job but he can do better to decrease pollution”

“Use light and motion sensors in public buildings so lights aren’t on when they don’t need to be”

In addition to the above discussions children and young people felt passionately that the Mayor should no longer allow development on green spaces.

“I think that under NO circumstances should London’s green spaces be built on”

Views on saving energy, waste and water:

Our discussions highlighted that children and young people would like to see more money spent by the Mayor on creating new greener energy resources.

Children and young people talked about how money should be spent on making public transport greener. Some children and young people saw this very much as the job of the Mayor. One group of young people described how buses should be powered differently so that carbon dioxide is not released into the air.

“Make new transport that doesn’t effect the environment”

“More people should use the tube; there should be more trams. I think the congestion charge is a great idea, but the fee should be much higher, like £20 or above”

Some of the children and young people also discussed how street lighting could be improved to use energy efficient light bulbs.

“Street lighting needs more energy efficient bulbs”

Education:

All groups consulted spoke about how tackling climate change and education should go hand in hand. They expressed the great importance of how education should underpin the slowing down of climate change. Young people expressed that the success of slowing climate change down rests, in fact, on the extent to which the nation can be educated on the dangers of climate change.

“Time should be spent educating people around climate change and energy efficiency”

Children and young people spoke passionately about protecting London from climate change. Many of the children and young people consulted expressed a wish that the Government and the Mayor of London should take greater steps to educate people on climate change and endorse ways in which everyone can help slow down climate change.

This should be supported with practical ways that make it easier for everyone to produce less waste, recycle and be more energy efficient.

“Show people the facts and consequences of global warming”

“Tell everyone what climate change could actually do in the world we live in”

“Teach people more so they understand the situation and the repercussions”

“Inform the community about recycling”

“ Do more to promote ways to stop global warming”

Children and young people felt that information leaflets should be distributed to all households living in London that make being energy efficient easier. A greater importance should also be placed on the National Curriculum to educate the future generation in being energy activists.

“Our school should teach us more about the planet and climate”

Intergenerational issues and climate change:

A large proportion of the children and young people consulted felt strongly that there is an expectation placed on them by the older generation that tackling climate change is an issue only for the younger generation.

It was felt by some of the groups that the older generation think less about preventing climate change, as they will not have to face the consequences of their actions.

“Most people over 20 don’t really care about climate change, people who are older will be dead before climate change happens”.

All the young people we spoke to expressed a sense of enthusiasm at having such a large responsibility of tackling climate change placed on them.

“Older generations have got us into trouble now its up to the younger generation to bail us out”

“A little effort, a bit of planning, being energy efficient isn’t rocket science”

The London Plan children and young people's views:

In a variety of activities children and young people were given the opportunity to discuss the new amendments to the London Plan on climate change, expressing their ideas, priorities and concerns.

In all groups children and young people spoke highly of the London Plan and the Mayors intentions to slow climate change down.

As an exercise children and young people were asked to discuss and identify which of the new amendments is most important and why. All groups highlighted that the most important amendment is that new buildings use renewable energy for the following reasons:

“Renewable sources can be used again and again. It's not expensive in the long run and the most effective sources. It is good for long term use”

“This priority will make the other ideas in the London plan not necessary as buildings will be producing their own energy”

“I like the idea of renewable energy as it uses natural resources to bring energy”

Whilst children and young people could identify the merits of the London Plan, a large majority felt that the London Plan whilst a good idea does not go far enough to alter the effects of climate change.

“I think that the policies are not going far enough because people are not getting the message. And I think people are not putting enough effort into the environment”

“If it had gone far enough then there would be dramatic changes. The only dramatic change is the green belt, though they build on that still”

“Yes, I agree with the plans made by the Mayor but I don't think he's taken it far enough. The plan made by the Mayor should have more effect on the community”

“The plan only addresses the issue of energy – when there are far more contributing factors to climate change e.g. food packaging”

Children and young people discussed that the Mayor should be doing more to slow climate change down. Groups identified that the amendments in the London Plan need to be more specific and stricter:

“What makes a building an ‘energy champion’ – how efficient will it be?”

“Why just make new buildings energy efficient. All buildings should be eco-friendly”

“Eliminate and ban all cars/lorries/vans etc that emit high levels of chemicals harmful to the environment e.g. 4 by 4’s with high Co2 emissions ”

“Enforce packaging laws and standards to reduce unnecessary waste”

“Make people recycle”

“I think part of the plan should say that under NO circumstances should London’s green spaces be built on”

“Important buildings should set an example about being green, schools and museums”

Children and young people spoke passionately about how improvement to public transport should form a key part of the London Plan, in order to be a realistic alternative to driving.

“Improve public transport – including preventing the cost from rising, get the money from the congestion charge”

Groups also felt that new laws should be passed to ensure all new buildings, extensions and improvements to new buildings are environmentally friendly.

“Make buildings insulated, energy efficient and use renewable sources of energy”

Lots of the groups also discussed the initial expense that is needed to make a home eco-friendly. Children and young people discussed that green alternatives should be made cheaper and grants given to low-income families.

“Make the energy saving products cheaper e.g. solar panels and wind turbines”

“Give people on low wages help to be green”

Many of the groups consulted whilst critical that the London plan needs to be harder at tackling climate change, children and young people felt strongly that the London Plan should not just be an initiative for London but be extended to other settings and areas of the country.

“Policies that are effective should be extended to cover a wider area than just London”

“The London Plan should be a policy in schools as well and should be taught”

“I think the London Plan should be spread all over England so that more energy can be saved and used over and over again”

“Spreading the London Plan all over the UK will be a good example to other countries over the world, and soon the world will be saving energy and using efficient energy”

Conclusion:

The children and young people who have taken part in the consultations have relished the opportunity to discuss the London plan, expressing their ideas, priorities and concerns around climate change.

The National Children’s Bureau very much hope that the Greater London Authority will read with interest the ideas and views expressed in this report by children and young people.

Children and young people expressed a hope that this would be the first step in involving children and young people in the climate change agenda. They very much hope that the Greater London Authority will implement some of their ideas and suggestions in both the London plan and wider climate change policy.