

# 2022 Reading Schools Climate Conference

## Panel Speeches

- Councillor Tony Page
- Peter Moore
- Natalie Ganpatsingh
- Heather Marshall
- Alison Foster
- Grace Andrews

### Councillor Tony Page - Lead Member for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport



“Thank you for coming. It’s probably been over 10 years that the Council has been hosting this conference and it gets better each year. We are all committed to delivering Net Zero by 2030. At a strategic level we have a Local Plan which encapsulates all the targets and sets ground-rules for all new developments (i.e., all homes have to be carbon neutral).

Some if not all of you use the buses, and this is an important arm for us in delivering alternatives to the private car as well as encouraging more cycling and walking in the town. We also work with other neighbouring local councils such as Bracknell and Wokingham so that travel through our whole area impacts least on the town.

Waste management is another joint area of work with Wokingham and Bracknell partnership. Our aim is to recycle as much as possible of things that are put out. One thing to do at home is to make sure that

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you're recycling properly and engaging in the food waste recycling that all the authorities are doing. Lastly, on housing we are investing money in our own housing stock to make sure they're more efficient.

All of this taken together has produced a 55% reduction in our carbon footprint. Reading Borough Council is 4<sup>th</sup> out of 374 local authority areas in terms of carbon reduction. Collectively we have done a good job and we've been included in an important international Carbon Disclosure Project. Reading was added to their prestigious 'A' list, so we've also been assessed independently at having done a good job. But we are not complacent: doing a good job is not enough!"

**Peter Moore - Head of Climate Strategy, Reading Borough Council**



"Councillor Page and other Councillors get elected and set the policies, then me and my team put the policies into practice. We are asking a lot of people to change what they do in Reading so it is important for the Council to lead by example. To this end we have set a target to reduce our corporate emissions by 85% by 2025, on our way to Net Zero by 2030.

We're meeting these targets by:

- Electrifying our vehicle fleet - the first electric refuse truck arrived on the streets last year and we intend to have replaced the whole fleet by 2028;
- Starting to replace gas boilers with electric heat pumps;
- Rolling programme of energy efficiency in buildings;
- Roof mounted solar systems on roofs of council buildings (supplying electricity in this way keeps down the bills);
- Installing LED streetlights.

Added together, Reading Borough Council has delivered a 71.3% reduction of its own carbon footprint since 2008/9."

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**Natalie Ganpatsingh - Founder and Director, Nature Nurture**



"I run Nature Nurture, connecting people with nature right on their doorstep. Looking out at the world, we see the climate crisis, high levels of nature loss around the world and the crucial inter-relationships between species, as well as the global health challenge.

Non-communicable diseases are arguably brought about by our sedentary lifestyles, which also create recognised mental health challenges. Both understanding the ecology and being in nature can help us learn about these things. Research is showing the benefits of being pro-environmental in our everyday lifestyles (University of Derby). We are working to restore nature and being outside during pandemic meant we really realised how restorative it is to connect with nature."

**Heather Marshall - Thames Water**



"I'll come away being positively inspired yourselves so thank you so much for all your energy and ideas. I want to present to you a slightly more balanced idea, both in the way that we impact on the environment but also the way that the environment affects us in Thames Water.

In the first instance, Thames Water extracts a lot of water, and we take it to treat and then pipe to your homes and businesses. After you've used it, we take that away to our waste treatment works and release it ideally in a clear state into the environment.

- **Preventing pollution** of our waterways is something that we are very committed to. This comes about through storms pressure causing the release of effluent, and also that combined storm outflows (sewers) capture surface water as well. We are aiming to reduce the annual duration of spills by 50% and by 80% in sensitive areas.
- **Biodiversity** is important in that where we're extracting water, we're impacting our environment. These are large works and often have layers of biodiversity on that site ... our commitment is to deliver 5% enhancement of biodiversity here. Then with new capital investments, it is 10% enhancement to biodiversity. This is an interesting space, and with all the political changes, biodiversity has been on and off the government agenda. I think this is an area where it's very important for youth to have a voice.
- **Efficiency in dealing with waste** is our fourth area of impact, finding ways to make our processing more efficient, and using our poo to generate bio-methane gas into the grid.
- We're also looking at solar as a big opportunity, not just on buildings but also on water bodies. There is some cool new technology with floating UPV cells – the biggest one is to date is on Queen Elizabeth II reservoir.

The environment has a pretty significant impact on us too. Whether it's too hot or too cold affects old pipes, too little or too much water as well as the risk of invasive species e.g., zebra and quagga mussels. Operationally, Thames Water has a target to reach net zero by 2030, and we're working hard to tackle pollution so that we can continue to have the water that we all need."

**Alison Foster** - Programme Director, Building Berkshire Together, The Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust



“How seriously everyone has taken this conference makes me feel very hopeful (for my own well-being) so thank you for all of that. I work in Royal Berkshire on the new hospital programme – we will be getting funding for a new hospital which means either redeveloping where we are already or moving to a new site (dependent on funding).

We want to make sure our new hospital contributes to bringing us to our Net Zero target by 2030, and we have joined the others in the Reading Climate Change Partnership in working to this target. This goes back to Reading being leaders. For example, Reading University has the largest congregation of climate experts in the world. You may know that the climate stripes were developed and designed at Reading University.

Some of the things that impact us all mean it is healthier to be green. For example, issues with extreme weather: we used to have a lot of issues in the winter but now more people come into hospital in the summer with heat related issues. Our built environment wasn't meant for this level of heat. There is even melting of some medications as the temperatures. How we manage this is extremely important.

Our Trust has a Carbon Champions programme with 95 volunteers working in their own departments contributing both big and small things towards significant change. We're the largest employer in Reading with 7,000 staff and we have a responsibility to show how things can be done. One good example was a 'uniform amnesty' to deal with uniform sitting in people's homes: 800 items were returned. If you are interested, there's an application for our Youth forum and on that, young people will help with ideas for the new hospital and helping with net zero. Do fill out the form and follow us on social media. Thank you for inviting me here.”

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#### **Grace Andrews - Youth Council Representative**

"I am the Member of Youth Parliament for Reading. My focus is amplifying your concerns. As the most environmentally aware generation, this is one of the most important issues that comes out of our Make your Mark ballot – please use the link to take part in this next year. Environment was the third most important issues for youth around the country and that influences our campaigns.

What we do is to conduct research and work in the community to make sure that your voices are amplified through our campaigns. I work with organisations like those in Reading Climate Action Network (RCAN). I also visited Westminster where I spoke about the environment – UK Youth Parliament is the only one other than MPs allowed to speak in the House of Commons."

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