



Our progress and impact 2023-24



**Students Organising
for Sustainability
United Kingdom**



Hello!

The urgency of the climate and nature crisis has never been clearer.

Once again, the 2024 Living Planet Report confirmed that **every global indicator tracking the state of nature is in decline**, reinforcing the scale of the challenge ahead. Despite a record number of national elections in 2024 and overwhelming public demand for action, **climate and nature were sidelined in political debates**.

Conflict in Sudan, Palestine, Ukraine and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) continues to drive humanitarian crises, made worse by climate change. Three decades ago, 44% of conflicts occurred in climate-vulnerable states; today, that figure has risen to 67% ([International Rescue Committee](#)). **The fight for climate justice has never needed to be more intersectional or urgent.**

We've seen witnessed devastating fires in Angola and the DRC, record flooding across Thailand and Malaysia, and Hurricane Beryl's impact in Jamaica and extreme weather across Europe and the US.

And yet, in the face of this, students remain at the forefront of change. At SOS-UK, **we believe education is a powerful tool** - not just to inform, but to lead. Whether it's pushing climate education up the political agenda, or uniting schools, colleges, universities and communities in nature action, **we're here to empower students to lead.**

In 2023-24, we engaged more students than ever before - over 600,000! And we know that **the drive to create a better future doesn't stop when students leave education.**

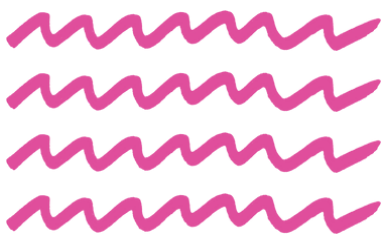
That's why **we're working to make climate and nature action inclusive and accessible to everyone, regardless of background or identity.** Our data transparency campaign, The RACE Report, is pushing for a more racially and ethnically diverse and inclusive environmental sector - and in 2023-24, a record 161 organisations took part.

Our impact is only possible because of the people behind it - our dedicated staff, volunteers, funders, and partners. **Your continued support has helped turn ambition into action and strengthens this growing movement for climate and nature action.** Thank you for being part of it.

Amira Campbell
SOS-UK President



Our mission



We're on a mission to transform education so people protect our climate and nature.

Our education system helped cause the climate and nature crisis, but now we're making it the solution. We are working to make sure everyone develops a commitment to protecting the earth and puts it to work - whether it's at school, university or in their careers. By empowering students and educators to build a better world, we can transform the lives of generations to come.

We empower students to lead, supporting them so they don't have to fight for change alone. We unite people from every background, inside and outside education, because protecting our earth matters to each and every one of us.

Our students don't just drive change at school, college or university but for decades to come, as workers, employers and community members. We're creating climate and nature protectors in every community. And they mobilise countless others, changing our country, and even our world, for the better.

We need to act because...

	89%	of higher education students want where they study to incorporate and promote sustainable development
	76%	of UK adults think it's important to prepare children and young people for climate change at school
	33%	of secondary teachers say climate change is embedded in their subject's curriculum in a meaningful and relevant way
	21%	of secondary teachers say the nature crisis is embedded in this way
	60%	of students in further or higher education say they find themselves thinking and worrying what the world will be like in future because of climate change
	36%	of the UK's public sector building carbon emissions are created by schools and universities

Our aims

We're working to...

Change the way we teach, what we learn and how that's assessed so climate and nature are a priority



Make sure places we learn in show what's possible - empowering us to support nature, the climate, and the communities most affected



Ensure students from every background can play their role in protecting and building a better world



How we work

We deliver programmes, campaigns, training, events and research that:

1

Empowers people – students and staff - across our education system to discover their unique role in protecting the planet by developing the values, skills and knowledge needed

2

Helps organisations across the education sector to respond to the climate and nature crises - from our schools, colleges and universities to qualification and professional bodies

3

Supports students to work together, channelling their passion to make sure our leaders and decision makers prioritise climate and nature

Our impact in numbers 2023-24

Engaged over

612,700

students

Supported over

7100

staff

Worked with over

2700

organisations

Delivered over

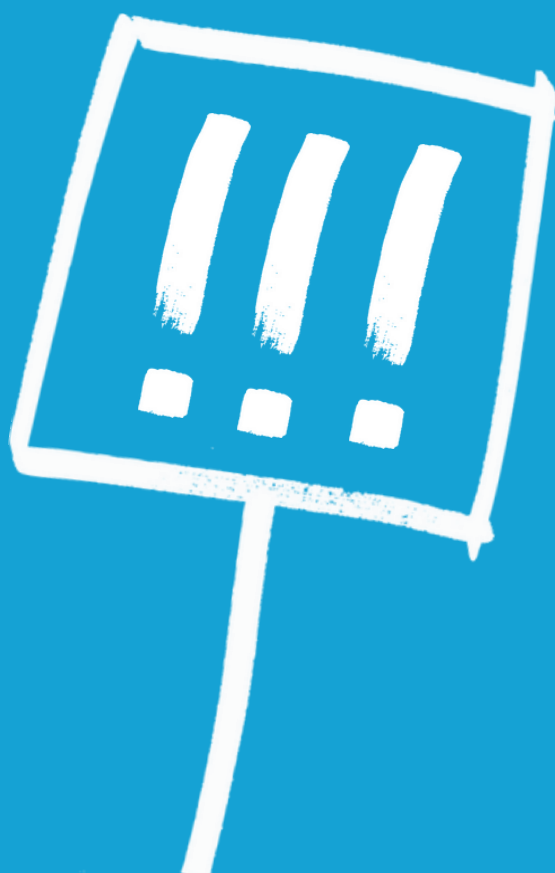
570

opportunities and
activities

Enabled over

34,100

actions by organisations



We're changing the way we teach, what we learn and how that's assessed so climate and nature are a priority

We believe sustainability should be a core thread woven through every subject, not treated as a standalone topic. Every student should have the opportunity to become a sustainability-literate learner, and every subject should help them understand and respond to the challenges our world is facing.

Teach the Future



Harnessing the opportunity of the General Election, Teach the Future mobilised young people to push for curriculum reform and school decarbonisation through a climate education report card campaign, helping make climate and sustainability education a live election issue.



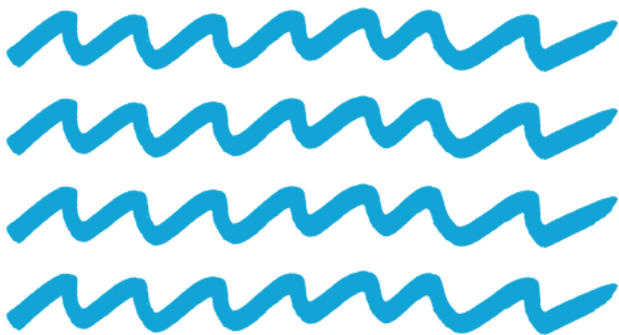
Teach the Future inspired a wave of student-led action to put climate education firmly on the political agenda in the run-up to the election. Young campaigners across the country graded parliamentary candidates on their climate education pledges using report cards. They empowered their peers with practical resources to challenge candidates at hustings, on the doorstep, and across social media - making sure climate education couldn't be ignored. The movement didn't stop with students. Through letter-writing campaigns and pledge drives, young people brought adults along too, building a broad coalition of support for urgent reform.

In partnership with the Ministry for Eco Education, we were proud to welcome Bridget Phillipson MP to Corbridge Middle School. There, projects such as Curriculum for a Changing Climate and Teach the Teacher were showcased - highlighting student-led efforts to build a more sustainable, future-ready education system.

Our campaign highlights include:

- ➡ **286** political candidates graded on climate education and school decarbonisation
- ➡ Mobilised **754** supporters to email their candidates, urging them to “speak up for climate-friendly schools”
- ➡ **3,222** people signed a pledge demanding that “schools need investment NOW!”, supporting the Let's Go Zero campaign for increased funding to retrofit and rebuild school buildings

Responsible Futures International



Throughout 2023-24, students and staff from seven universities worldwide teamed up to co-create and pilot a global version of the UK focused Responsible Futures programme. By drawing on diverse experiences and priorities, the outcome is a programme ready to drive sustainability education across universities worldwide.

Responsible Futures is a whole-institution change programme and accreditation that embeds sustainability across all aspects of student learning.

In partnership with the International Association of Universities, we co-developed a global Responsible Futures framework with university staff and students, adapting it to local contexts while keeping a whole-institution approach. The cohort shared insights throughout the year and piloted four audits with 36 student auditors, reviewing over 200 criteria. The project gained global recognition, showing the impact of collaborative sustainability education.



Responsible Futures International is now open to universities and colleges worldwide. We will continue to collaborate with participants and their students to refine the programme. We will continue to prioritise student voices, local cultures and lived experience to ensure the programme supports meaningful change, staying relevant to the evolving sector and the urgent need for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

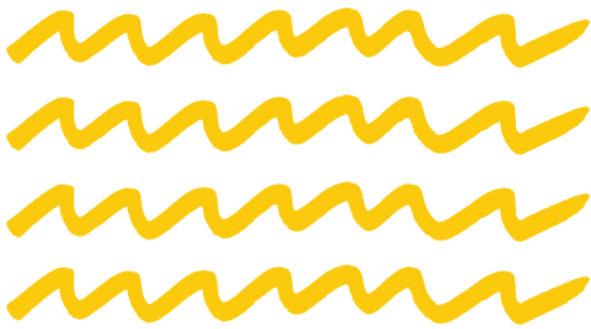
Our key outcomes from the pilot include:

- ➔ Students and staff **developing skills** through training, workshops and their overall Responsible Futures experience
- ➔ Approaches to learning for sustainability across the institutions are becoming **more 'joined-up'**
- ➔ **Student leadership** in sustainability education work has **increased**, and enhanced
- ➔ Institutions have developed a baseline understanding of existing sustainability education efforts through the audits, and captured student recommendations for progress
- ➔ Taking part has **fostered constructive dialogue** between students and senior leaders on sustainability and climate justice

We're making sure the places where we learn show us what's possible, helping us to help nature and the climate

Learning for a sustainable future doesn't only happen in classrooms - it's also influenced by the broader environment students learn in. That's why we believe sustainability and climate justice should be embedded across the whole education system, not just in the curriculum but in how education institutions function day to day.

Wilding Campuses



Wilding Campuses is a pilot programme, bringing people, plants and wildlife to UK campuses. Working with 3 education institutions across urban Nottinghamshire, we're supporting young people from underserved backgrounds to make positive changes for nature in the places they study.



The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries, and Nottinghamshire reflects this, losing 97% of flower-rich meadows and 90% of heathland since the 1920s. Our research shows 19% of students lack access to nature, while 64% want more opportunities to connect with it at study.

With National Lottery Heritage Fund support, we're helping the University of Nottingham, Nottingham College, and Bluecoat Aspley Academy create wildlife-friendly campuses. This project empowers students, staff, and local communities to lead nature recovery, with a focus on inclusion for those often excluded from nature spaces.

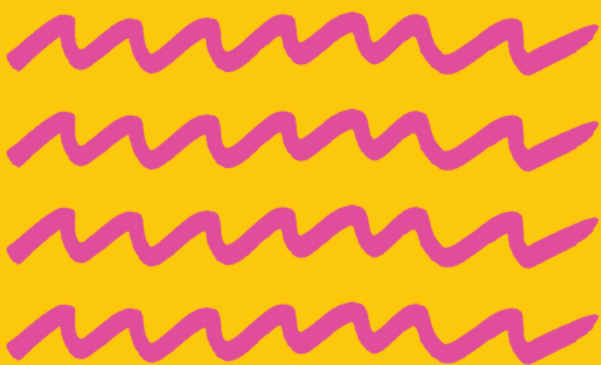
Since launching in May 2024:

- ➔ New local Project Managers have been appointed at each site.
- ➔ Project teams have **developed habitat plans** in partnership with Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust
- ➔ **Activities** so far have included wildflower sowing, outdoor yoga sessions, gardening for mental health and a nature art show led by SEND students
- ➔ Over **100** young people have been directly engaged, with many more reached through campus-wide outreach

Coming next...

- ➔ A **rewilding podcast** featuring staff from across the partnership
- ➔ **Student-led biodiversity monitoring** to assess changes in wildlife

Student Switch Off



Student Switch Off focuses on supporting students to take sustainable action in their residences. Now running for 18 years and involving 1.6 million students, the multi award-winning programme builds students' sustainability knowledge, enhances skills and mobilises them to lead on sustainability initiatives resulting in quantifiable energy, waste and water reductions.

For many, moving into student accommodation marks their first experience living away from home. During this transition, students often need guidance on how to live independently - and sustainably. **Student Switch Off** supports them through this change, helping embed sustainable habits from day one.



The initiative focuses on engaging all students, not just those already environmentally aware. Through practical tips, interactive activities, and tailored advice, the programme offers accessible ways to live more sustainably in halls and student residences. This early intervention helps set positive behaviours that last throughout university and beyond.

In the 2023–2024 academic year, Student Switch Off reached over 94,000 students across the UK, Europe, Australia and the US. Engagement included:

- ➡ Over **4,000** students taking part in sustainability quizzes and competitions
- ➡ More than **3,000** students directly engaged during on-campus visits
- ➡ Nearly **200** trained volunteers, building their employability skills and equipping them to complete accommodation assessments and encourage their peers to take action

Our programme is seeing real impact with:

- ➡ **79%** of participants reported taking action to save energy in their daily lives
- ➡ **57%** encouraged others to act on climate issues
- ➡ Over **90%** said they plan to continue these energy saving actions long term

As each academic year begins, we're excited to inspire another generation of students to lead sustainable, empowered lives.

We're working to ensure students from every background can play their role in protecting and building a better world

At the heart of our work is the belief that sustainability must be inclusive, representative, and just. We know the impacts of climate change and the degradation of nature are not felt equally. Marginalised communities often bear the brunt of environmental harm while facing the greatest barriers to participating in the solutions.

The RACE Summit



The inaugural RACE Summit in July 2024, hosted at University College London with partners Diverse Sustainability Initiative and Wildlife and Countryside Link, brought together people from across the environmental charity sector to champion diversity and inclusion.



The RACE Summit was a landmark event in both scale and ambition, bringing together a wide range of voices to have honest conversations and co-create meaningful solutions for advancing inclusion in the environmental charity sector. By creating a supportive space for people of colour and showcasing real-world change initiatives, the summit highlighted the power of dedicated spaces for collaboration, reflection, and shared learning.

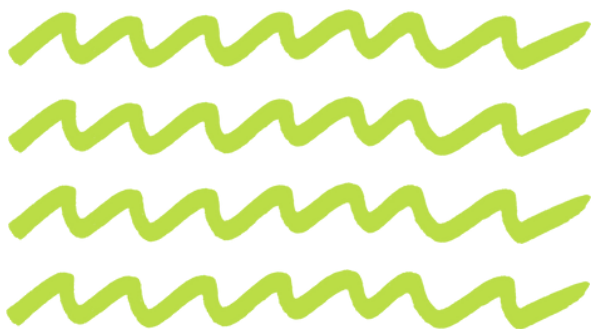
Our goals were to:

- ➔ Provide a platform for racially and ethnically minoritised people to share experiences at all career stages
- ➔ Enable delegates to work together to develop practical tools for greater inclusion
- ➔ Inspire change by showcasing real-life initiatives making a positive impact
- ➔ Support people across the sector to build networks and make connections from HR and EDI professionals to senior leaders, and emerging talent

Key outcomes include:

- ➔ Delegates left with clear, actionable steps to improve diversity and inclusion
- ➔ The summit created a supportive network for people of colour and allies in the sector
- ➔ The event sparked ongoing conversations between participants and a shared drive for sector-wide change

Teach the Teacher



Teach the Teacher has continued to grow over the past year, with strong engagement, tangible impact, and deepened partnerships. The programme has supported more students than ever to have meaningful conversations with their educators about climate and sustainability education.

Teach the Teacher helps equip primary and secondary school students with the skills and knowledge to engage their teachers and local trainee teachers on climate change and the need for climate education for all.

This year, Teach the Teacher significantly expanded its reach and influence, supporting more students and educators than ever before to engage meaningfully on climate and sustainability education. The programme continues to evolve, with new partnerships, strategic developments, and increasing visibility across the education sector.

Our key achievements include:

- Engaged 260 educational institutions to date, with 192 students delivering training sessions to 960 teachers
- We successfully **evolved the delivery** of the project through integrating lessons into initial teacher education pathways. Increasing our presence at education sector events also helped us reach more teachers.
- Forming **strong local partnerships** means we're reaching schools across towns and counties, for example in South Lanarkshire, 100 students across 16 schools joined a training session facilitated by the local council
- We've **secured media coverage**, amplifying our message on the need for better climate education across the UK and beyond
- We 'taught an MP'! **Bridget Phillipson MP**, now Secretary of State for Education, joined our Teach the Teacher session at Corbridge Middle School, helping us put climate education on the national policy agenda as well as promoting it within schools

Looking ahead, we'll continue to strengthen our integration into initial teacher education, grow strategic partnerships, and increase participation in education events - helping ensure more educators are equipped to teach about the climate and nature crisis.



Looking forward

Over the next year we're focusing on making sure...

1 ...courses and lessons better reflect what and how students want to learn

Through...

- Engaging with the Government's Curriculum and Assessment Review to influence long-term curriculum reform
- Deepening our engagement with regulators and key education bodies
- Supporting more universities to embed sustainability in their teaching and learning
- Using COP30 to push for stronger climate education commitments

2 ...universities maintain or increase the action they are taking on sustainability

By...

- Continuing to deliver our flagship programmes that support institutions to act on sustainability across a range of areas
- Working via students' unions to help students learn positive behaviours, such as energy efficiency and sustainable food choices, in their day to day lives
- Holding universities to account on their net zero goals

3 ...schools, colleges and universities increase their action on the nature crisis

By...

- Rolling out projects that transform land use on campus and boost biodiversity
- Developing our support programme for university and college owned farmland
- Making sure students and staff have the knowledge and understanding needed to protect nature

4 **...students from all backgrounds see the environment sector as a career destination for them**

Through...

- Continuing to engage environment sector employers in improving their action on equality, diversity and inclusion
- Expanding the focus of our projects and campaigns from race and ethnicity to other characteristics and backgrounds where people are facing exclusion and underrepresentation

5 **...school students are able to connect and collaborate to take action on the nature and climate crises**

By...

- Using our current work in schools as a foundation, we'll explore further what school students want and need to work together to drive action on climate change and protecting nature
- Teaming up with partner organisations who currently support and represent students and young people





Get in touch

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