

Young Food Ambassadors meet with Children's Minister

Young Food Ambassadors have met with Children's Minister Vicky Ford to discuss their role in promoting healthy eating and activities, following confirmation in the Spending Review of the Government's extended support for disadvantaged children.

The Minister and a group of seven of the Young Food Ambassadors for the Children's Right2Food Campaign were joined by their Ambassador Dame Emma Thompson and Food Foundation Executive Director Anna Taylor for a Zoom meeting on Thursday 26 November where they spoke about their shared ambition to tackle childhood obesity and improve access to nutritious meals for all children, especially those most disadvantaged.

It follows the Government's [announcement](#) of a £170m support package for the most vulnerable over winter and the expansion of the £220m Holiday Activities and Food programme to cover Easter, summer and Christmas in 2021. This was confirmed again by the Chancellor on Wednesday as part of the Spending Review settlement.

Children's Minister Vicky Ford said:

I'm so grateful for the energy and dedication shown by the Young Food Ambassadors, who have shared their experiences with me of school food and healthy eating.

We all agree on the importance of a healthy, nutritious meal and the impact it can have on children's development. Through our expanded Holiday Activities and Food programme, thousands more young people will benefit from this during the Easter, summer and Christmas breaks next year.

Executive Director of the Food Foundation Anna Taylor said:

Today we saw a high level of engagement from Minister Ford on the issues of child food insecurity and inequalities in obesity. Since our last meeting with the Minister in July, the Government has made significant commitments to tackling child food insecurity during the holidays, which we applaud.

It was clear today that the Minister understands the importance of engaging with young people living with food insecurity when considering these solutions. The Young Food Ambassadors look forward to collaborating further with the Minister on decisive action to ensure no child misses out on a healthy diet.

Minister Ford, who recently wrote to schools to encourage them to make every effort to provide hot meals that meet the School Food Standards, praised the work of school caterers for getting kitchens back up and running since September.

At least 99% of schools have been open each week since the start of term in November, and schools, colleges and early years settings across the country have worked extremely hard to remain open.

The Minister spoke to the Young Ambassadors about their experiences of healthy eating at school and encouraged them to work with the Governments from across the four nations to promote this.

She also invited Dame Emma to visit a Holiday Activities and Food project next summer after the expanded programme has been rolled out across England.

Asha, 14 from Cumbria, one of the seven Young Food Ambassadors to meet with Minister Ford, said:

In our meeting today we thanked the Minister for what she's done so far to address holiday hunger. We're pleased she listened and took action on our feedback from our previous meeting in the summer and we look forward to that happening again this time. We're excited that now we'll now have regular meetings with her team so we can work together to deliver our Charter recommendations and make sure all children can access a healthy diet every day.

Another Ambassador, Ryan, 18 from Glasgow, said:

It's so important for Ministers to not only listen to children and young people's views and experiences of food poverty, but make sure they are taking their views into account as early as possible during the policy-making process. Today, we had our second meeting this year with the Minister Ford – we're glad she values our input and we hope to keep engaging with Government in a more formalised way so that us young people can be part of lasting policy solutions.

The Ambassadors, who met with the Minister earlier in the summer to discuss their 'Right2Food' charter and new podcast series, spoke positively about the expansion of the holiday activities programme and the increase in the value of Healthy Start vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25 a week from April 2021.

These were both announced by the Government on 8 November, alongside a new £170 million Covid Winter Grant Scheme to be run by local authorities in England, at least 80% of which is earmarked to support with food, bills and other essential costs to cover the period to the end of March 2021.

The Department for Education this week wrote to local authorities with

further details of the £220 million Holiday Activities and Food programme and will appoint a national organisation to support with local delivery of these projects from next spring.

Working together to put us on course for a clean resilient age

Thank you Shaun very much for that introduction.

Good afternoon everyone on this meeting.

Firstly, a huge thank you to Green Alliance for inviting me to speak today.

And thank you also for everything that you have done and that you continue to do, to advance climate policy and climate action.

And frankly, for the moment, we have moved into this virtual world where we are doing everything virtually.

Some of us remember a time when we actually did physical meetings and physical events.

And I am really looking forward to that time again and coming in and speaking with you live so to speak, in front of you.

So, I just wanted to talk a little bit about one of the physical visits I did manage to get in, and this was within days of being appointed to the COP26 role,

I went to New York to visit the United Nations.

I had an opportunity, alongside the Secretary General, to speak with the UN Permanent Representatives.

During that trip I also had a whole range of meetings. And there was one particular meeting that struck a real chord with me.

And it was one of these informal gatherings and we had the permanent representatives from the developing countries around the table.

And we went round the table and I asked each of them what did climate change mean for them and their country.

And then we got to the representative of one of the small island developing states.

And she said this: "Unless we tackle climate change urgently, I won't have a

place to call home".

And actually, what made this really stark message so poignant, was also the manner of the delivery.

She was calm, she was collected, it was matter of fact.

And that was the point at which I resolved, that whatever else we may achieve on the road to COP, at COP26 itself, we must make this the most inclusive COP ever.

And I want to ensure that the voices of the vulnerable countries, of indigenous peoples, civil society and of course, young people, are heard.

Heard loud and clear.

And on an equal footing with larger, richer nations.

I am going to return to some of the practical things we are doing to make sure that happens. But I just want to go back to your launch, the Green Alliance's launch in 1979.

And your founding Chairman, Maurice Ash, said at the time and I quote: "We're a bunch of optimists. We are not doomsters. We believe in the possibilities of the future."

Well on the basis of that description, I very much consider myself part of the Green Alliance gang.

And there are reasons to be optimistic when it comes to climate action.

Because I do believe we are at a vital inflection point.

Where the views of governments, businesses and civil society are coalescing in a determination to tackle climate change.

Quite rightly, we have all been focused this year on the Covid emergency and that's right and proper.

But all of us recognise that the climate emergency hasn't gone away.

The clock is still ticking and those two hands are still moving inexorably closer midnight.

But we can, and are, taking action.

As we look to emerge from the dark shadow of Covid, I want 2021 to mark the beginning of the future we all want.

I want 2021 to be the year the world unites behind the Paris Agreement.

Putting it on course for a clean, resilient age.

Governments around the world are looking to build back greener.

And you've seen in China, Japan and South Korea they have committed recently to going net zero like other countries.

And crucially, what governments are doing is putting policy heft and finance behind their intentions.

Businesses are also committing to science-based net zero targets.

If you take into account all the companies, cities, regions, and other non-state actors, which have signed-up to the UN's 'Race to Zero' Campaign launched in June, they collectively already represent 50% of the global economy and 25% of global emissions.

All these organisations remember have committed, on science-based targets, to reach net zero emissions by 2050 or, indeed, earlier.

And actually, business realises that going green is not just the right thing to do, but it is also what their customers want.

And, increasingly, is what drives shareholder value.

The UK as a country has demonstrated that green growth is possible.

Over the last 30 years we have managed to grow our economy and yet at the same time cut emissions by 43%.

Last week the Prime Minister launched the UK's blueprint for a green industrial revolution.

This is a plan to consign to history, industrial chimneys and processes, vehicle tail pipes and home heating which spew out harmful emissions.

What we want is a clean future powered by hydrogen, wind turbines and electric vehicle batteries.

Revitalising our industrial heartlands and economy and creating high-value added green jobs.

Of course, all the while civil society is rightly holding a mirror up to the actions of governments and businesses.

And you're spurring us on to change.

And each of us as individuals can play our part.

Over 100,000 people have joined the Count Us In project since it was launched in October.

Committing to reduce their carbon footprints.

You'll know that 350 young people, from over 150 countries are, right now, holding their own virtual, mock COP26.

And I was very honoured to take part in the opening ceremony last week.

All around the world, youth, indigenous peoples, and communities are taking action on the ground to adapt, and to reduce their climate impact.

Such work is absolutely critical.

The crisis we face requires us to work together across society.

Business and investors.

Cities and regions.

Universities, schools, individuals, and civil society, all of us play our part.

Of course, it has to happen alongside the work of national governments.

To adapt, to reduce emissions, and to finance the change.

Our efforts support one another.

And at the end of the day, Government policy should be there to encourage business investment.

And business innovation can provide new options for consumers.

While civil society can create the conditions leaders need to act, and represent community interests in policy-making.

When we all turn our attention to the same problems, we know that we can make progress much faster.

And that is why, as well urging countries to come forward with ambitious emissions reduction targets, and adaptation plans,

And alongside calling on donor countries to live up to their obligations on international climate finance.

Our COP26 Presidency is focussing efforts on five critical issues which need an all-of-society response:

Restoring nature, adaptation and resilience, clean energy, clean transport and finance.

And I want to give you an example of the cooperation across all parts of society, and this is through the work that we are doing with the Energy Transition Council, a group of political, financial and technical leaders who are focussed in the global power sector.

And the aim of this grouping is to speed up the global transition to clean power.

And we have representatives of business and civil society also involved in its country and regional meetings.

And when it comes to nature, we have established the Sustainable Land Use Dialogues.

And we're bringing together producer and consumer countries for discussions to tackle deforestation.

And these discussions have been informed by consultations with business and civil society, which have been held in Africa, Asia and Latin America by the Tropical Forest Alliance.

We are committed to driving this work forward over the next twelve months.

I spoke earlier about listening to diverse voices on the road to, and at, COP26.

And we want the interests of groups across society, from both the global North and South, to be heard loud and clear in the COP negotiations.

To achieve this, I have been clear that they will be at the heart of both our preparations for COP, but of course the summit itself.

It's why I was so keen to set up the COP26 international Civil Society and Youth advisory council. This is up and running.

And it's co-chaired by two young climate activists.

One from the global south, the other the global north.

As I understand it, this is the first time any COP Presidency that such a grouping has been established.

We are also holding a series of events with our fellow UN climate leaders.

To maintain momentum around the COP26 political process.

And drive real world change.

Next week I am meeting the UN Observers, who represent civil society, at a virtual event to make progress on vital negotiating issues.

Now you'll all know of course that next year, the UK holds the presidency of the G7, our partners Italy hold the presidency of the G20 and together, we share the presidency of COP26.

On the road to COP, I want to see the golden thread of climate action as a key theme, flowing strongly, like a torrent, through the G7, the G20 and every major international leader-level gathering ahead of the two weeks of COP26 in November 2021.

And the first stopover on that road is the Climate Ambition Summit which is taking place on 12 December.

The UK is hosting with the UN and France, and in partnership with Italy and Chile. And this is the point that marks the five-year anniversary of the

Paris Agreement.

We are calling on countries to use this summit to announce ambitious commitments on emissions, adaptation and climate finance.

And yes, the UK will be setting out its own Nationally Determined Contribution metric ahead of 12 December.

There will be room for non-state actors to make commitments too at the Ambition Summit.

And we will absolutely provide a platform for civil society, young people and indigenous peoples to make sure that their voices are heard.

That is something that I consider to be absolutely vital in this process.

In the run up to next November we will host more discussions, to make progress on the issues in the negotiations.

Because we all recognise that the next twelve months are critical.

We must put the world in the best possible position to unleash the full potential of the Paris Agreement.

As I have said, we all have a role to play.

So, firstly let me thank everyone who is on this call for everything that you have already done – your organisations and you individually.

Secondly, keep up the pressure and ambition level.

Please challenge leaders, wherever you find them – in schools, universities, businesses and every level of government, to do more.

Thirdly, if you have not already done so, Join the “Race to Zero” campaign.

And sign-up to “Count Us In”.

By working together, we can bring about the change we need.

At the end of COP26, I want to be able to look my friend from the small island developing state in the eye and I want to be able to say to her: all of us, working together, made a positive difference.

And we did it for today’s, and tomorrow’s, generations.

Thank you very much for having me speak and I’m very happy to answer some questions.

Contributing to a robust and fair system for 2021 examinations

The Social Mobility Commission is pleased to be contributing to the planning process being led by the Department for Education and the exam regulators, Ofqual, as we work together to plan next year's examinations in the light of the ongoing pandemic.

The right measures implemented in a timely way could ensure an equitable and rigorously planned system is in place for more than one million students in the UK who will be taking GCSEs, A levels and BTECs next summer.

Most recognise that there is a widening achievement gap in the nation's schools and that the impact of coronavirus has disproportionately hit pupils in areas of deprivation.

To support students from lower socio-economic groups, the Social Mobility Commission has made the following recommendations:

- Suspend school performance tables for 2021, as they fail to take account of the disproportionate learning loss experienced by students in areas of deprivation.
- Work with schools and colleges to develop a clear and consistent system for collecting centre assessed grades that can be used as a contingency measure if individual students are unable to take exams.
- Offer students the opportunity to take exams in Autumn 2021, without this being considered a 'resit'. The results would need to be made available in time for UCAS applications for 2022 entry.
- Support schools with extra resources, such as additional staff and venues, so that they can provide Covid-secure examination environments.

Responding to Covid-19 challenges

Sasha Morgan, director of the Social Mobility Commission, says: "We are delighted to make an effective contribution to the debate and be part of the solution. Incorporation of our recommendations will ensure that disadvantaged students have the best possible experience next summer."

Sammy Wright, a Social Mobility commissioner and Lead for Schools and Higher Education, has prepared a detailed statement setting out our advice.

He said: "2020 has revealed much of what is problematic about our examinations and qualifications system, so we are pleased to get involved in planning practical solutions for 2021.

"We will continue to work closely with the Department for Education, Ofqual, schools, colleges, and social mobility charities to refine these concepts

over the next few months.”

The statement in full:

“We recognise the hard work that teachers, school leaders and the Department for Education have done in keeping schools open in the most difficult of circumstances. We believe that public examinations should go ahead next summer as the best way of allowing students to gain recognition for their work, and to allow them to move on to the next stage of their lives. However, it is hard to overstate the extent to which Covid has widened existing gaps in achievement and educational entitlement, and as such, there need to be significant short and long-term actions to guard against the worst inequalities in the exam system.

Schools must not be ambushed at the last minute on this – they need time to adjust their teaching and their focus in ways that allow them to provide an effective education for the most vulnerable. Teachers are experienced and capable, but are under huge strain even during a normal exam season – during the pandemic every effort must be made to support them. We must also not fall into the trap of thinking that solutions that benefit all students will address the widening achievement gap. In a competitive exam system like ours, the key worry is that disadvantaged students will be outperformed by their peers whose experience of lockdown has been far smoother and more productive.

The key question the commission has considered in setting out our advice is ‘What constitutes a good outcome for the students who have been most disadvantaged this year? Are they better with weaker grades in more subjects, or better grades in the subjects they need?’ We firmly believe that if we can free up schools by taking away some of the pressure of performance tables that we think are unlikely to tell us anything useful about the system this year, then we can allow deprived students who have often suffered the most to be given tailored solutions.

In light of this, we recommend the following for schools:

- School performance tables should be suspended in 2021 because they cannot perform their proper function this academic year. They are poorly equipped to reflect or take into account variegated levels of learning loss. We also believe the performance tables create perverse incentives in the school system. Without the threat of league tables in 2021, schools can be freed to allow the students who have been most heavily impacted to focus on the key qualifications they need for progression.
- The Department for Education, and the regulatory board Ofqual, should produce a clear, simple system for collecting centre assessed grades that can be used as a contingency. The system must be rigorous, moderated, and issued in good time for staff to gather any information needed. These should then be used for students unable to sit exams, or for whom their schools have decided to focus on other key qualifications.
- In those instances, students would take formal exams in only critical subjects for their personal progression and receive a certificate of

completion where a centre assessed grade was used. This blended approach would ensure that students had covered the content, but free them up in the last stretch to focus their revision where they needed.

- Students should be allowed the option of an exam series in the autumn, as they were in 2020, without this being labelled as a 'resit', and the results should be released in time for the UCAS deadline for 2022 entry.
- Additional places for full resit years should be funded at the same rate as current 16-18 funding.
- The use of a back up exam is a sensible option, but it should be after the main series, not before.
- Mitigations in content and structure of exams benefit all candidates, and so do not address gaps between those who have struggled with remote learning due to home circumstance and those who have not. As such, while some adjustment (like the reduction in content of English Literature) may be practically necessary and useful, it should not be regarded as a solution.
- Generosity in grading for 2021 should aim for a midpoint between 2019 and 2020, but following a normal mathematical distribution, rather than replicating the anomalies of 2020.
- Schools must have access to extra venues and extra staff to invigilate those venues to enable them provide Covid-secure environments during examinations.
- Arrangements for students isolating at the time of exams have to take into account the vast difference in personal and socio-economic circumstances. Home invigilation should be avoided.

For the students progressing to university:

- Arrangements providing grants and opportunities for gap years for those with fewer familial resources should be retained.
- At the moment, some courses prejudice those who have done an extra year, and some institutions struggle to accommodate retakes of years because of funding reductions for older students – this could easily be addressed.

SUSPECTED POACHERS DETAINED AFTER RURAL CRIME OPERATION IN COUNTY DURHAM

The enforcement operation was located in the village of Escomb in Bishop Auckland, where fisheries enforcement and police officers joined forces to target rural crime and wildlife offending in County Durham.

Environment Agency officers, who were patrolling the banks of the River Wear at Escomb, identified the three males using a high powered lamp and a 1.5-metre gaff (which is a long-handled steel hook used to spear the fish).

It is thought that the men were attempting to illegally remove salmon and sea trout from the Wear that are currently spawning in the shallow waters. These fish are particularly vulnerable at this stage in their life cycle and have historically been the target of 'poachers'. Such cruel methods of capture are extremely damaging for the animals. If they manage to escape, they are very likely to die due to severe wounds.

David Shears, Senior Fisheries Enforcement Officer for the Environment Agency, said: "This joint operation with Durham Constabulary enabled us to protect local wildlife and highlights the consequences of illegal fishing. This sort of activity will not be tolerated.

"Atlantic salmon stocks are low and the River Wear is one of the country's major sea trout and salmon rivers. Not only are these fish an integral part of our environment but contribute significantly to local communities through the income generated by properly managed fisheries."

Officers were able to observe the males, and direct other Environment Agency and police officers to their location. All three were successfully detained. The gaff and lamp were seized and two of the males were released pending further investigations.

The third man was taken into custody for an unrelated matter.

PC Scott Crowhurst of Durham Constabulary, said: "We worked in partnership with Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement Officers to quickly detain the suspects, ascertain their details, and provide support in dealing with this issue.

"Poaching and related rural crime will not be tolerated, and we will continue to work collaboratively with partner agencies to target those that engage in rural crime."

People who operate unlicensed nets or fish illegally risk prosecution, with unlimited fines and possible prison sentences available to the courts. Environment Agency officers also have the powers to seize equipment and vehicles.

Fisheries Enforcement Officers who are patrolling the North East's coasts and rivers and responding to reports of illegal fishing are abiding by the latest Coronavirus government guidance.

If you ever wish to report any incidents of illegal fishing or poaching then please contact the Environment Agency's 24-hour incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

[You can buy a fishing licence online](#)

Reduced Telephone Enquiry Line Opening Hours

News story

Reduction in phone operating times due to the ongoing impact of coronavirus (Covid-19) measures



Due to the ongoing impact of coronavirus (Covid-19) measures and to maintain a consistent service whilst protecting the welfare of our staff we are temporarily reducing our telephone enquiry service opening hours. As from the 30 November 2020 we will be open from 10am to 1pm Monday to Friday (excluding Bank Holidays). Please only call us if your enquiry is urgent.

You can of course contact us outside of these hours using the following appropriate email addresses:

For all enquiries relating to deceased person's estates
bvestates@governmentlegal.gov.uk

For all enquiries relating to the issuing of the Treasury Solicitor's consent to administrative restoration (waiver letter) bvwaiver@governmentlegal.gov.uk

For all enquiries relating to the cash assets of dissolved companies
bvcbt@governmentlegal.gov.uk

For all enquiries relating to the non-cash assets of dissolved companies (e.g. land, shares, intellectual property, chattels)
bvcompanies@governmentlegal.gov.uk

For all general enquiries about the work of the Bona Vacantia Division
bvinfo@governmentlegal.gov.uk

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