

Education Secretary speech at the Natural History Museum

Hello everyone,

I hope that you are as thrilled as I am to be standing in this incredible hall, in one of the most famous museums in the world.

I really do feel very honoured to be with you.

None of us can be in any doubt just how critical climate change has become.

I want to thank all of you, and my colleagues from parliament but also my team, Minister Walker who's led on this project, and are already doing so much to reverse the damage, to put our planet on a safer, more sustainable course. We will continue, I pledge to you, that we will continue to work tirelessly with you and of course to listen, listen to you, teachers, leaders, and of course young people themselves who are shaping much of what we do in the department.

But while the scale of the challenge is great, there is still much that we can do now and we are already making sure happens.

This is not, I think, a time for doom and gloom. This is a time, as Phoebe just reminded us, for positive action.

The entrepreneurial, that can-do, Bear Grylls spirit in this country can make all of us, certainly me, much more confident that we will win this fight.

At COP 26... it was the first time that I was able to bring together fellow ministers of education to a COP gathering. Environment Ministers coming together for that summit and I hope to build on that at COP27 in Egypt and COP28 in the United Arab Emirates. It was a proud moment to be able to announce how we are putting climate change and sustainability at the heart of education.

Today we see the proof of those words of that with the final version, I hope, of the Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy that we announced.

Young people have to be given a reason to believe that they can change the world for the better. If you give them the facts about a situation, it gives them the levers to change it for the better. And that will, I hope, give them hope. That move from anxiety to agency. We want them to be fired up by determination and not cast into despair.

So how are we going to do this?

Well, I announced two important measures at COP that we will be launching this autumn. The National Education Park, the education estate is the size of Birmingham, and we're going to link it up so that students all around the

country, and I hope that other countries, the Italian Minister when I shared this with him immediately thought this was something we could hopefully build together. They can do geospatial mapping, and they can see through sharing videos how they can rewild the education estate, as I know the Natural History Museum is determined to do here as well. This is alongside, The Climate Leaders Award. Both of these are going to shift the dial in how we approach sustainability in education.

It shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone that young people are already very committed to a greener, more sustainable planet and I want to do everything to continue and to back them in this encourage this passion.

One of the most exciting announcements in our strategy is to capitalise on that passion and to extend learning about the natural world.

So we will introduce a natural history GCSE, giving young people a real chance to develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of our amazing planet.

We want to inspire the next generation of David Attenboroughs, on the day he was recognised by the United Nations for his work in preserving our wonderful planet, it really is a privilege to be here, and of course the future scientists and tech entrepreneurs who will preserve and protect our planet who will make the leaps we need to keep our world safe.

We are also taking steps to extend teachers' skills and new professional development support, so that they can be confident in the classroom in teaching about climate change and sustainability.

We're going to speed up carbon literacy training throughout our education communities, so that by 2025 every nursery, school, college and university can put in place a climate action plan.

But innovation and green growth will not flourish unless we deliver a workforce with the right skills to make them a reality.

It is not enough to simply hope that talented people find green career pathways, we need to build these career pathways and provide those people, who want to join in this endeavour with the skills they need to fulfil that career in the future.

This strategy sets out how we are rapidly skilling, reskilling and upskilling our workforce for green jobs.

For example, there are a wide range of green apprenticeships already up and running from nuclear desk engineers, wind turbine maintenance and research scientists.

By September 2023 students will be able to apply for a T Level – a T Level is a fusion between an A Level and an apprenticeship and I am determined to make them as famous as A Levels – in agriculture, land management and production.

We have already promised that all new schools and colleges are going to be net zero in operation and of course resilient for a 20C temperature rise. It

means that our school building standards will be the best in the world.

We are committed to building four new schools and one college using this innovative technology, so that one day all our schools can be built in this way, from natural materials.

I would urge you to have a look at our wonderful Gen Zero prototype– we've brought a portion of the prototype that we had at Glasgow, here to the Museum tonight. Have a look at it, it really is a remarkable piece of engineering and design.

Future generations will judge us on how we responded to this challenge. This strategy shows how we will not let them down.

Education is how we will equip young people with the future agency to make real difference, with the skills they need to look after this precious Earth.

Education is how we unlock the unlimited potential of the next generation to make that difference.

We must not, and I am determined, that we will not, give in to despair.

Together, I know that Phoebe and her generation can do this, and they have our full backing.

Thank you.