



PRESS RELEASE

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SUSTAINABILITY, STEAK AND SCIENCE - WHAT BRITAIN'S YOUTH WANT 16-24 yr olds say yes to a sustainable Britain as long as it comes with steak on the side

New research amongst 16-24 year olds shows that young people are refreshingly optimistic about achieving a sustainable future, although in some areas, such as reducing their meat intake, many are not ready to change their ways yet.

In the first initiative of its kind, Global Action Plan, the environment charity that works with young people, business and communities, invited its young Climate Squad volunteers to describe their vision for a sustainable Britain in 2020. Global Action Plan then asked YouGov to question a further 1,053 16-24 year olds from all walks of society for their views on these ideas.

The YouGov results revealed that the wider group is behind many of the aspirations described by their green peers, with 89% wanting to see people living more sustainably in 2020. Self-sufficiency proved popular with 81% wanting to see the majority of homes producing their own energy and 73% keen on seeing rooftops being turned into growing spaces by 2020. There was surprisingly strong acceptance for the concept of high carbon taxes resulting in companies investing heavily in sustainable development, with two thirds of 16-24 year olds supporting the idea.

Young people were generally less enthusiastic about curbing their personal air travel, with 31% in favour of restrictions on air miles, but just over half (57%) giving the idea the thumbs down. Other modes of travel proved less controversial, with 87% wanting to see more people walking and cycling.

Local communities are set to benefit from a desire in the young to do their bit, with 75% saying they would like to see people spending more time volunteering. Supermarkets and brands might be interested to note that 72% were keen that only products that meet high environmental standards should be stocked. Education and employment prospects look bright as four-fifths (80%) would like to see science and engineering subjects at school becoming more popular as jobs in the environment sector grow.

The Greenprint to 2020 created by the Climate Squad paints a fascinating picture where town and city views are carpets of green thanks to rooftops and balconies converted to growing food; the roar of engines are replaced with the swish of bicycles and the blossoming renewable energy revolution has transformed the urban landscape, as roadsides, pavements, roofs and buildings are used to harness wind and solar power. Shopping baskets are filled with products that meet high environmental and ethical standards and growing numbers of students are studying science and engineering, helping the UK become a world leader in green innovation and solutions.

When asked to consider how the Vision could be achieved, respondents felt that businesses needed to set a green example to the public by shifting to low carbon fuels, becoming more resource efficient and manufacturing greener products and packaging. The young people acknowledged the influence of business on public opinion and behaviour, which meant business had a responsibility for advocating a greener way of living. Food companies and supermarkets were singled out to play a vital role in helping Britain cope with higher global food demands over the next ten years.

While businesses might be the engine of change, it was felt that Government had to be in the driving seat with regulations, schemes and incentives that will guide the pace and tone of change. More investment in public transport, penalties for unsustainable consumption and greater education on the benefits of greener practices were seen as key. Teaching the impact of climate change, its science and how to embed greener living in everyday life should be on the Schools curriculum.

Reflecting on what the survey results tell us, **Trewin Restorick, CEO of Global Action Plan** comments:

“Young people face a radically different future. By 2050 scientists tell us we have to cut carbon emissions by at least 80% which will fundamentally change our economy and the way we live. This pioneering research shows that young people are up for the challenge and want to see a more sustainable UK. They can't do it on their own and want business and government to step-up-to-the mark and speed up the transition. “

“The research also shows areas of contention. More debate is needed on issues such as GM food, cutting air travel emissions and moving away from intensive meat diets if all young people are to be truly convinced.”

Gregory Barker MP, Minister of State for Energy and Climate Change remarks:

“This report shows that the Climate Squad really are on the money in setting out a vision of a low carbon future. Young people are key players in making sure this vision becomes a reality. Britain’s low carbon economy will need a massive injection of skills and today’s young people are in pole position to grab hold of them.”

Laura Tenison MBE, Business Woman of the Year and MD of JoJo Maman Bébé adds:

“The Climate Squad Greenprint to 2020 is a gift to business leaders. It provides us with a rare glimpse into the minds of those who will be, as the workforce of the future, at the sharp end of helping making a sustainable Britain a reality. Businesses face the ubiquitous problem of rising cost prices compounded by economic hardship amongst consumers. Cost management must be endemic for economic success but we cannot afford to cut back on environmental policies. It is the responsibility of business leaders to invest in long term sustainability and not just short term profits. Our young people are placing enormous trust in us to lead the way – so let us do just that”.

Laura will be keynote speaker at the Climate Squad Greenprint to 2020 event.

The Climate Squad Greenprint to 2020 will be launched on Thursday 24th February, 8:45 – 11am at the Western Pavilion, Southbank Centre, London, SW1.

Notes to Editors:

1. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1053 UK 16-24 year olds. Fieldwork was undertaken between 13th - 17th January 2011. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults aged 16-24. Copies of the research available – please see contact details below
2. The full Climate Squad Greenprint to 2020 is available – please see contact details below
3. Link to case study of Global Action Plan Youth Project
<http://www.globalactionplan.org.uk/climate-squad-1>
4. Global Action Plan <http://www.globalactionplan.org.uk> is the UK’s leading environmental behaviour change organisation and, since 1993, has helped businesses, schools, and communities reduce their carbon footprint to positively impact on the environment and climate change. Global Action Plan consistently achieves significant environmental and financial savings in the UK by empowering people to take action on energy, waste, water

and transport. We are the only charity in the UK to be supported by the United Nations Environment Programme.

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