



March 2025

# CONFERENCE OF SCHOOLS 3

South Lanarkshire's

Youth Forum on Climate Change and Sustainability

## Empowering the Next Generation: SLC Youth Forum Hosts Third Conference of Schools

The SLC Youth Forum on Climate Change and Sustainability was established in 2021 with a clear mission - to empower young people to become active voices in environmental advocacy and education.

This year, building on the success of previous events, the forum set out to organise its third Conference of Schools, specifically designed to engage primary students (P5–P7) and their teachers in meaningful discussions on climate change and sustainability.

What made this conference truly unique was its youth-led approach. Planned and delivered by secondary students from S1 to S6, the event demonstrated the power of young leadership in climate action. Through interactive activities and engaging discussions, these student leaders inspired their younger peers to take tangible steps toward environmental responsibility, proving that change starts with simple, everyday actions.

By equipping the next generation with knowledge and practical solutions, the SLC Youth Forum continues to drive a culture of sustainability, ensuring that young voices play a vital role in shaping a greener future.



The conference brought together 300 young people from 100 primary schools across South Lanarkshire, featuring keynote speeches from Youth Forum members, interactive workshops led by students, and a session delivered by Active Schools Coordinators.



Students from Kirklandpark Primary School, Strathaven

## Objectives

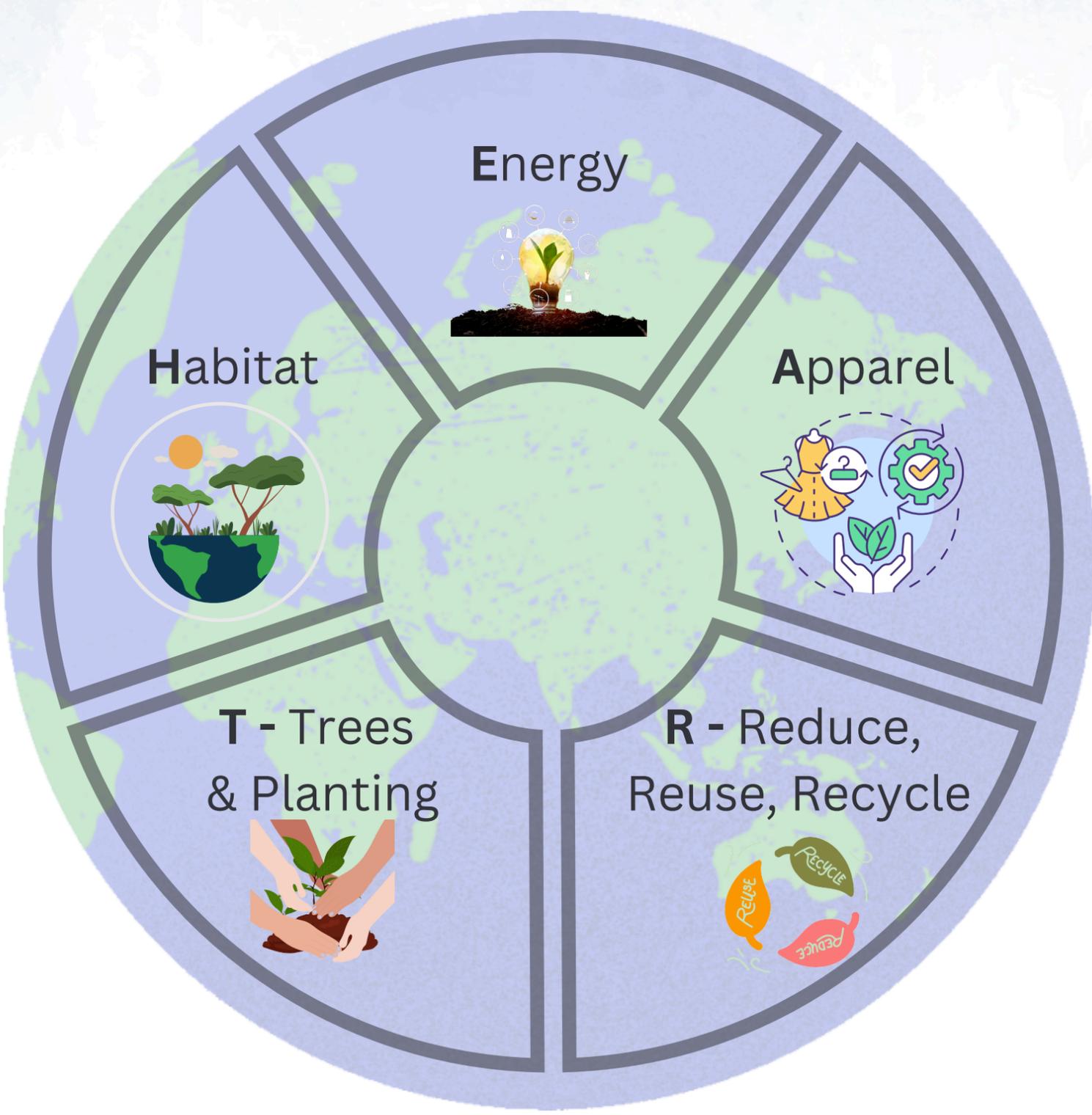
The conference was designed with several key objectives in mind:

- Educate and inspire children and teachers about climate change and sustainability through interactive learning.
- Provide hands-on experiences that could be seamlessly integrated into primary school curriculum.
- Foster collaboration between primary schools and young climate leaders, strengthening cross-sector partnerships.
- Empower secondary students by giving them leadership roles in planning and executing environmental initiatives.
- Encourage primary school students to see themselves as active contributors to environmental solutions.



- **Event:** Conference of School 3 (COS3)
- **Dates:** 26th - 28th March, 2025
- **Venue:** Hamilton Palace Sports Grounds
- **Key Speakers:** Namatai Chakona (Holy Cross High), Amber Cooper (Trinity High) and Faith Gilmour (Strathaven Academy)

The theme for the conference was **EARTH**, representing five key areas of climate education:



Overview of workshops:

**E** **Energy:** “Power Up: Understanding Renewable Energy”  
Exploring sustainable energy sources and their impact on the planet.

**A** **Apparel:** “Eco-Friendly Heroes: Sustainable Fashion”  
Understanding the environmental effects of clothing production and the importance of sustainable choices.

**R** **3Rs** “Waste Not, Want Not: Recycling and Upcycling”  
Encouraging waste reduction through creative and practical recycling solutions.

**T** **Trees and Planting:** “Planting for the Planet: Green Your World”  
Promoting tree planting and the benefits of urban greenery.

**H** **Habitat:** “Eco Explorers: The Importance of Biodiversity”  
Highlighting the crucial role of diverse ecosystems in maintaining environmental balance.



**Planning and Organisation**

A dedicated team of Youth Forum students took the lead in planning and delivering the event, working closely with teachers and the local authority to ensure a successful and impactful conference. Forum members served as the key speakers, sharing their knowledge and insights with participants, while an S6 media team from Larkhall Academy provided comprehensive media coverage of the event.

The Youth Forum’s responsibilities included:

- Selecting and developing engaging workshop themes tailored to younger students.
- Coordinating with schools to encourage teacher and student participation.
- Designing interactive activities, such as tree planting and a sustainable fashion challenge.
- Managing event logistics, including venue setup, materials, and scheduling.
- Leading discussions and presentations, using relatable and engaging communication styles to connect with their audience.



Gillian Hamilton, interim Chief Executive at Education Scotland



Amber Cooper, Trinity High, Youth Forum Secretary and Key Speaker at COS3.

**Participants and Engagement**

The conference attracted teachers and students from 100 primary schools, all eager to enhance their understanding of sustainability. Teachers attended not only to support their students but also to gain professional development insights on integrating climate education into their teaching. Primary school students actively participated, engaging with their older peers, who served as mentors and role models throughout the event.

**Feedback for primary children included ...**

I liked the relay race about recycling and making bracelets from old material. Making the water windmills was good

We want to have an event like this in school

I enjoyed getting to know about the problems of the Earth and how we can solve them

It was an extremely enjoyable day because we got to do fun activities but also learn all about looking after our environment

Today was excellent and so much fun

I really loved meeting new people from other schools



## Key Findings and Feedback



### **Overall Experience:**

A majority of teachers rated their experience 4 or 5 out of 5, praising the well-structured programme and engaging content.



### **Most Popular Workshops:**

“Trees and Planting” and “Sustainable Fashion” emerged as favourites, with attendees particularly enjoying hands-on activities such as tree planting and upcycling challenges.



### **Student Feedback:**

Primary students found the interactive elements especially impactful, particularly sessions run by Active Schools and practical activities like planting trees and upcycling materials.



### **Most Valuable Aspects:**

Teachers valued the collaborative nature of the event and the inspiring leadership demonstrated by the Youth Forum members. Many expressed appreciation for the take-home strategies that they could apply in their classrooms.



### **Areas for Improvement:**

Suggestions included better lunch arrangements and improved audio for workshop presentations to enhance engagement.



### **Impact on Teaching and Future Conferences:**

Most teachers reported feeling better equipped to address climate change in their teaching, with many expressing interest in incorporating youth-led initiatives in their own schools. There was overwhelming support for future youth-led climate events, with both teachers and students eager to participate again.

## **Feedback for primary teachers included ...**



The most valuable aspect of the conference was seeing how engaged and passionate the children were about climate action. Their curiosity, creativity and willingness to explore new challenges were inspiring.

The event fostered a sense of empowerment, showing children that their voices and actions matter in tackling environmental challenges.

The connection between the pupils from secondary schools and primary schools was wonderful and to see them all working together on learning for sustainability. The Youth Forum presenters were excellent!

All aspects of climate being addressed in an interesting and informative way. The children presenting are passionate and this helps their message shine through.

The young adults leading the sessions were fantastic, they communicated well with children and did their best to keep it engaging and entertaining. Well done to all involved!

We had a lovely, fun, and informative day. The Youth Forum worked very hard and it showed. I was amazed at how passionate they all were as well as how helpful and kind they were to us all.



Students and teacher from St Leonard's Primary School, East Kilbride



**Conclusion**

The SLC Youth Forum Conference of Schools 3 was a resounding success. It provided an enriching and inspiring experience for both students and educators, fostering enthusiasm for sustainability and climate action. The leadership displayed by the secondary students played a pivotal role in the event's impact, proving that young people can be powerful catalysts for change.

The positive feedback and strong demand for future events highlight the importance of continuing youth-led initiatives in climate education. By empowering young people with the tools, knowledge, and leadership opportunities they need, we can ensure that climate change and sustainability remains a priority in education and community engagement. This conference exemplifies how intergenerational collaboration can drive meaningful progress in the fight against climate change, reinforcing the idea that no action is too small when it comes to protecting our planet.



Larkhall Academy, Energy Group



Strathaven Academy and Trinity High, Trees & Planting Group



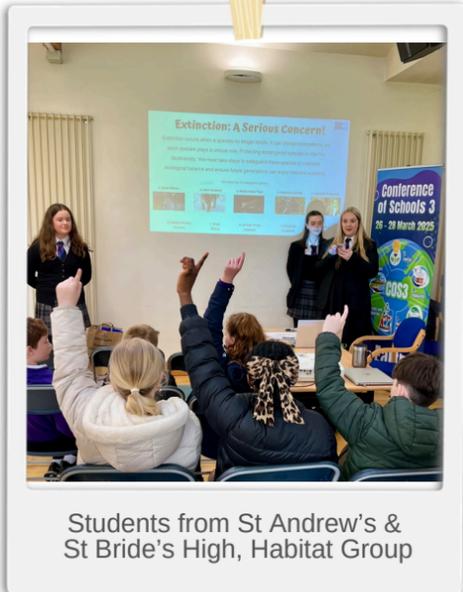
Students from Calderglen High and Larkhall Academy, Sustainable Fashion Group



Students from Rutherglen High, Habitat Group



Students from Cathkin High, 3Rs Group



Students from St Andrew's & St Bride's High, Habitat Group



Faith Gilmour, Youth Forum Secretary

Media coverage conducted by Larkhall Academy students:



[Video 1](#)  
[Video 2](#)