



Turning green: an environmental action plan for the UK ELT sector

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FOREWORD

Exhaustive reports* show climate change is not a vague possibility for future generations but a destructive force that is already here, destroying homes, habitats, communities and livelihoods all around the world.

English UK and the UK ELT sector must join the international movement for climate action and help protect our planet and our future.

As an organisation we will make bold changes to cut our emissions and improve our environmental impact, and will help our members do the same.

Our goals extend beyond our association too. We will use our platform to promote sustainable and regenerative practice, and will work with everyone in UK ELT to build a better, greener sector.

If we come together as an industry, with our presence across the UK and our extensive international reach, our impact will be huge.

As an industry that involves international travel, environmental action may feel daunting or the idea of 'green ELT' may even seem impossible. But there are significant changes we can make to address and mitigate the difficult question of travel. We will work doubly hard to reduce our emissions and negative impact, and also support environmental action and education to increase our positive impact and influence.

UK ELT is creative, innovative and caring. We can rise to this challenge.

IT IS URGENT, NOT TOO LATE

If we act now, we can stop the worst effects of climate change. But our goals must be ambitious and our action immediate. We will focus on actions with the greatest impact, making real changes and leading our sector by example and with support.

We are delighted to present the first environmental action plan for UK ELT and hope you will join us in turning our sector green.

Not only can we show leadership in the UK business community by transforming our practices to cut emissions, but we can embed sustainability into our teaching and empower people from around the world to take action too.

Together we can build hope, protect nature and secure our future.

About this document

This document outlines our plan for environmental and climate action. It describes our approach, vision and aims, and has been approved by the English UK Board.

But it is not exhaustive. We invite English UK members, partners and UK ELT colleagues to share comments and ideas to help us refine and improve our plan.

We will also create an action group from the English UK membership to develop measurable goals, a timeframe and the more detailed steps we need to take to be successful.

* See, for example, [Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis](#), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's latest assessment report, August 2021.



**WE ARE DELIGHTED TO
PRESENT THE FIRST
ENVIRONMENTAL
ACTION PLAN FOR THE
UK ENGLISH LANGUAGE
TEACHING SECTOR.**

**LET'S TURN
UK ELT GREEN.**

OUR GREEN VISION

English UK's mission is to champion and advance UK English language teaching to create a sector that transforms lives through learning.

This is only possible if we live and work in balance with our environment, protecting our future and equipping students with the language and skills they need to face the greatest challenge of our time.

Being green at English UK means taking our impact on our planet seriously, reconnecting with nature and setting a new standard for our association, members and industry.

It means rethinking how and when we travel, the energy we use, the food we serve, what we measure and how we think of success.

It means reviewing all our services, events and practices through an environmental lens, and providing member centres with the support and information they need to reduce emissions and their negative environmental impact.

A green UK ELT industry is not only one that dramatically cuts its emissions and turns away from fossil fuels, but one that connects with positive environmental projects all over the UK and embeds sustainability into practice, from classroom to canteen to conference.

It is an industry that speaks up about the environment, connects with the values of its staff and students, is honest about challenges and sincere in its efforts to overcome them.

Green UK ELT will help students understand interdependence and sustainability, experience the natural world and feel empowered to address the biodiversity and climate crises.

English UK will lead by example through thoughtful and ambitious action. We will focus on working together, positive campaigning and collective action.

OUR APPROACH

BUILDING HOPE THROUGH ACTION

The environmental crisis can feel overwhelming. But with every action we take, we build more hope for the future. We will focus the difference we can make, rejecting passive optimism (that someone else will solve it for us) and sharing clear, practical steps that empower everyone in our sector to be a part of a transformation that builds a better world.

AMBITIOUS LEADERSHIP

The climate crisis is too urgent to wait for a call from government, bigger organisations or celebrities. We have the opportunity to become the leaders we need, showing determination and ambition, speaking up for our values and making real changes to how we live and work.

ACTION AT EVERY LEVEL

Environmental responsibility is not a choice between individual, business or government action. To be successful we need change at every level – from personal habits to reducing industry emissions to campaigning for greener government policy that benefits our sector.

CENTRING CLIMATE JUSTICE

Environmental destruction and the climate crisis are entangled with inequality, discrimination and oppression. Pollution, environmental degradation and the effects of global warming disproportionately affect black people, indigenous people and people of colour. We will ensure our environmental actions protect and support people and communities in the UK and around the world.

PRIORITISING REDUCTION

For a chance at limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees, we must reduce our emissions by more than half. To achieve this, we will prioritise measuring and cutting emissions, and avoiding environmental damage – in our own organisation as well as encouraging members, partners and UK ELT colleagues to do the same.

REDUCE THE BAD, INCREASE THE GOOD

As well as reducing harm, we will join initiatives, fund projects and support environmental education in UK ELT to increase our positive impact on the environment.

This is not about shifting, balancing or cancelling out our emissions, but rather to recognise both our positive and our negative impact, and work to increase the former and reduce the latter.*

USING OUR PLATFORM

As an association, we have a key role to play bringing people together to inspire and support one another in taking action. We will facilitate connections, share information and amplify voices to address this crisis together. We want to both inspire and learn from others.

HONESTY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

We are at the beginning of our environmental journey and have a lot to learn. We will openly share our work and welcome your feedback.

As an industry representative, we expect to be held accountable by our members and welcome voices within the membership or wider sector pushing us further and encouraging us to do more.

* Note this follows a 'contribution' not an 'offsetting' model, where we support and take positive environmental action without claiming it reduces our negative impact. We believe this is a more honest approach that will help us avoid greenwashing our activities and industry.



WHY SHOULD UK ELT GO GREEN?

EVERYONE HAS A PART TO PLAY

The climate and ecological crises are not going to be solved by one person, whether a politician, entrepreneur or activist. Everyone needs to take action and use their platform, whatever the size, to inspire others.

UK ELT, a key UK industry with international reach, has an important part to play.

WE ARE EDUCATORS

Education is key to addressing climate change. We have a duty to equip students with the knowledge and language they need to face the biggest issues of our time. UK ELT can empower, motivate and help people from around the world take environmental action.

WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

As international businesses and a sizeable UK industry, we have a wide sphere of influence.

We have the opportunity not only to change our own practice but to raise awareness among thousands of students, agents, suppliers, caterers, homestay hosts and other partners.

STUDENTS WANT GREEN ORGANISATIONS AND LESSONS

There has never been more concern about the planet or greater interest in protecting nature. Improving our industry's green credentials and talking about their interests will not only attract students to our sector but keep them engaged in ELT classrooms and activities.

COST REDUCTION & COMPETITIVENESS

The pandemic has been damaging for our sector. Thankfully many environmental changes, like improving energy efficiency, reducing consumption and avoiding waste, also reduce production costs and generate savings.

What's more, green credentials will attract environmentally conscious students and staff.

THE UK IS A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR

The UK is one of the richest and most carbon intense countries, especially historically. It is therefore even more important that we take climate action and stop the worst effects of a crisis that is hitting the poorest people and lowest-carbon countries the hardest.



OUR AIMS

LEADERSHIP

1. Prioritise environmental action, monitoring and reporting
2. Engage the whole team
3. Create a green team and environmental action group

ORGANISATION

4. Divest from fossil fuels
5. Reduce energy and water use
6. Reduce transport emissions
7. Refuse, reduce, reuse and recycle
8. Connect with nature and build a green culture in the workplace
9. Reduce emissions and include environmental content at English UK events
10. Communicate our green values, plans and actions openly and with conviction

MEMBERS

11. Include sustainability in English UK membership rules/ code of practice
12. Help members take environmental action
13. Encourage members to support environmental projects
14. Measure and report the carbon footprint of the English UK membership
15. Help members promote green credentials

INDUSTRY

16. Support and amplify the Green ELT movement
17. Encourage and facilitate a green transformation in UK ELT
18. Promote green UK ELT to the world
19. Encourage agents to take environmental action
20. Lobby the UK government for environmental action that supports our industry

BEYOND

21. Develop and implement accompanying antiracism and equity action plans

OBJECTIVES

OUR LEADERSHIP

To achieve real and lasting change, we will lead by example and demonstrate genuine commitment from the top at English UK.

Decision makers at English UK will prioritise and resource environmental work, set clear objectives, empower the team and celebrate successes.

1. PRIORITISE ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION, MONITORING AND REPORTING

Like all projects, environmental and climate action requires clear goals, time and energy to succeed. To maintain momentum, we will track and celebrate our progress. We will:

- i. Include environmental impact as a standing agenda item at leadership and board meetings.
- ii. Undertake a full environmental audit, set SMART objectives and monitor progress quarterly to maintain momentum.
- iii. Allocate staff time and resources.
- iv. Appoint and empower a green champion to support and challenge all levels of staff.
- v. Include environmental reporting in the English UK annual review.
- vi. Celebrate our environmental achievements and progress.

2. ENGAGE THE WHOLE TEAM

It is important that everyone is a part of environmental changes at English UK and it is up to the leadership team to ensure actions are communicated clearly and that everyone has the chance to contribute their ideas. We will:

- i. Run an internal workshop discussing and enriching our environmental plan with ideas and feedback from the team.
- ii. Build a green culture at English UK. See 8.
- iii. Create internal channels to share environmental information and achievements.
- iv. Foster an inclusive and open culture where everyone feels comfortable sharing ideas.
- v. Celebrate success together as a team.

3. CREATE A GREEN TEAM AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION GROUP

Forming an internal green team as well as an action group of ELT colleagues, will give our environmental work the focus and attention it needs. Working collaboratively and sharing ideas, the groups will drive through real, urgent change. We will:

- i. Recruit members who are committed to the goal of greening English UK and UK ELT. Ideally representing different roles, experiences, demographics and organisations.
- ii. Establish the group's scope, roles, commitment, meeting times and reporting.
- iii. Empower the green team and action group to implement the different aspects of this environmental action plan.

OBJECTIVES

OUR ORGANISATION

To embed sustainability at English UK, we will review all our services and practices through a green lens to find ways to significantly reduce our emissions and negative environmental impact.

We will speak up about our green goals and values, take positive climate action, share all our findings and changes to inspire others, receive feedback and lead our sector by example.

4. DIVEST FROM FOSSIL FUELS

In order to stay under a 1.5°C temperature rise, we must stop extracting and burning fossil fuels, which are overwhelmingly responsible for climate change. Divestment helps put pressure on fossil fuel companies, raise awareness and shift investment to cleaner energy. We will:

- i. Switch to an energy supplier that provides 100% renewable energy and invests in renewable energy sources.
- ii. Review and move investments, pensions, savings and other funds to schemes/ banks that do not invest in fossil fuels as necessary.
- iii. Clearly communicate our changes and be vocal about our goal of divestment.
- iv. Ask suppliers about their investments.

5. REDUCE ENERGY & WATER USE

Along with transport, energy is the UK's biggest source of greenhouse gas. Reducing our energy (including the energy needed to purify water) is key to reducing our emissions. We will:

- i. Undertake an environmental audit and set SMART targets for energy and water reduction.
- ii. Use practice and technology to make savings.
- iii. Switch from an on-site server to cloud computing.
- iv. Reduce our digital carbon footprint, deleting old assets from cloud storage and websites every six months; reducing image and document upload size; switching to a green website host; and researching green cloud computing options.

6. REDUCE TRANSPORT EMISSIONS

Transport accounts for 27% of the UK's emissions. We need to rethink our travel choices, reducing road travel and aviation in particular. We will:

- i. Meet online or hybrid whenever possible.
- ii. Quit all internal flights within Great Britain.
- iii. Reduce other flights by choosing digital alternatives, sending fewer staff and flying direct.
- iv. Encourage staff to choose low-carbon holiday transport by offering extra paid leave for journey days that use green travel.*
- v. Encourage staff to use low-carbon transport for commuting by providing a season ticket loan scheme and using the cycle to work scheme.
- vi. Continue partial working from home for staff.
- vii. Support environmental projects to help mitigate the impact of unavoidable journeys.

* See the Climate Perks pilot scheme



OBJECTIVES

OUR ORGANISATION CONT.

7. REFUSE, REDUCE, REUSE AND RECYCLE

Every device, stapler and brochure requires energy and natural resources, from extraction to manufacture to transport. To reduce energy consumption and protect nature, we must reduce our consumption, reuse and repair items to extend their lifespan, and avoid landfill waste and pollution. We will:

- i. Measure how much waste is going to landfill, recycling etc., set targets for reduction and promote low waste and good recycling habits.
- ii. Phase out single-use and disposable items like plastic cups and milk bottles, cling film, balloons, paper towels etc.
- iii. Reduce paper use and switch to recycled paper, from promotional materials to internal documents to toilet roll.
- iv. Switch to non-toxic cleaning products, paints, inks and other chemical products.
- v. Prioritise second hand, refurbished, efficient and durable products, and donate old equipment and furniture for reuse.
- vi. Explore the possibility of office composting.

8. CONNECT WITH NATURE AND BUILD A GREEN CULTURE IN THE WORKPLACE

We want to embed concern and interest for the natural world in our working culture, normalising decisions based on environmental impact. Connecting with nature also improves health and wellbeing, and increasing positive behaviour towards the environment, climate and wildlife. We will:

- i. Talk openly about environmental impact.
- ii. Explore training and development for the team, e.g. carbon literacy and environmental impact reporting.
- iii. Celebrate and participate in (inter)national days and challenges, such as green office week, and engage with local environmental projects.
- iv. Hold outdoor team activities, from walking meetings to local litter picking or beach cleans.
- v. Encourage meat free Mondays and introduce monthly plant-based team meals to try new low-carbon meals together.



OBJECTIVES

OUR ORGANISATION CONT.

9. REDUCE EMISSIONS AND INCLUDE ENVIRONMENTAL CONTENT AT EVENTS

Events not only have a carbon footprint but are an opportunity for engagement and action. We must demonstrate our commitment to sustainability through both delivery and content at all English UK events. We will:

- i. Deliver hybrid and online wherever possible.
- ii. Include environmental content at events.
- iii. Select venues and suppliers with strong environmental policies and practices.
- iv. Use sustainable materials and encourage delegates to bring reusable cups and bags.
- v. Provide environmental guidance for exhibitors.
- vi. Seek a green sponsor to champion environmental responsibility at each event.
- vii. Celebrate and support green delegate travel.
- viii. Serve plant-based food as far as possible to reduce overall event emissions.
- ix. Communicate and explain changes clearly before, during and after each event.
- x. Gather relevant information (e.g. mode of transport, ease of finding recycling facilities) and suggestions in feedback and booking forms.

10. COMMUNICATE OUR GREEN VALUES, PLANS AND ACTIONS OPENLY AND WITH CONVICTION

In order to be accountable in our sector, to demonstrate our commitment, raise awareness and to learn from others, we must be transparent about our environmental work and open to feedback. We will:

- i. Commit publicly to climate action and environmental protection through an environmental policy or planet pledge, and by sharing this plan widely.
- ii. House information about our environmental work prominently on the English UK website.
- iii. Develop an environmental communications plan, sharing regular content, practical guidance and updates across our channels.
- iv. Find and engage with new channels to join and support environmental discussion happening in UK ELT.
- v. Visibly mark and participate in eco-events, such as zero emissions day, earth day and international day of climate action. See also 8.3.



OBJECTIVES

OUR MEMBERS

English UK is a membership association. We represent and promote our members as top quality UK ELT providers.

This must include environmentally sustainable practice and climate action to fight for our future and help English learners develop the skills and knowledge they need to address the defining issue of our time.

11. INCLUDE SUSTAINABILITY IN ENGLISH UK MEMBERSHIP RULES/ CODE OF PRACTICE

To put sustainability at the heart of our association and support wide-reaching change, it is important to establish environmental standards for the ELT providers we represent, support and promote. We will:

- i. Task our environmental action group with proposing changes/ additions to English UK membership rules and code of conduct around sustainability and environmental responsibility.
- ii. Seek board and member approval for changes.
- iii. Communicate changes to members with clear justification and implementation period.
- iv. Provide materials, guidance and training to help members. See 12.
- v. Apply the same process to make equivalent changes corporate membership rules.

OBJECTIVES

OUR MEMBERS CONT.

12. HELP ENGLISH UK MEMBERS TAKE ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

To help our members embed sustainability and environmentalism in their organisations, we will provide training, information, guidance and support. We will:

- i. Survey members to find out what changes they have made, what challenges they face and what support they would like to see.
- ii. Share and provide relevant information and training to meet their needs, and help members improve their environmental impact.
- iii. Share teaching resources and guidance to help English UK members embed sustainability into the classroom.
- iv. Include environmental topics relevant to all aspects of ELT in English UK's ongoing professional development, training and conference programme.

13. ENCOURAGE MEMBERS TO SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS

As well as reducing our negative impact, we must increase our positive environmental impact by engaging with and supporting environmental campaigns and projects, especially as cutting emissions takes time. We will:

- i. Encourage members to support green projects and campaigns, especially local ones that students can engage with too.
- ii. Provide guidance on choosing effective projects, and on the difference between contribution and offsetting approaches.
- iii. Celebrate and promote activities across channels and to agent audiences, see 18.

14. MEASURE AND REPORT THE CARBON FOOTPRINT OF MEMBERSHIP

Measuring and collecting data is one way of demonstrating the importance of something. English UK does not yet collect data or report on the environmental impact or emissions of the sector we represent. To give this the status it deserves, and to gather the information we need to measure our progress, we will:

- i. Collect environmentally relevant data from English UK members.
- ii. Report on the environmental impact of UK ELT, e.g. estimating the carbon emissions of our industry based on student country of origin and weeks spent in the UK.
- ii. Undertake additional research, surveys and focus groups as necessary.

15. HELP MEMBERS PROMOTE THEIR GREEN CREDENTIALS

A number of UK ELT schools are starting to make changes. To celebrate their environmental work and to inspire others to follow suit, we will help members communicate and promote their green work and credentials. We will:

- i. Provide marketing and communications tips and guidance on how and why to promote environmental credentials.
- ii. Use our platforms to raise the profile of environmental protection and climate action in UK ELT. See 17.



OBJECTIVES

OUR INDUSTRY

The climate and ecological crises impact everyone and need action from as many people as possible, especially in carbon-intensive countries like the UK.

We will raise awareness and support change across our sector, amplifying the voices already speaking up for climate action, running positive campaigns for change and lobbying for policy that supports a green UK ELT sector.

16. SUPPORT AND AMPLIFY THE GREEN ELT MOVEMENT

It is inspiring to see a grassroots environmental movement developing in UK ELT. We must join and strengthen this growing green movement, amplifying their work and bringing more people into the conversation. Climate action requires mass involvement and we have the platform to help achieve that within UK ELT. We will:

- i. Use our channels to raise the profile of events, information and content about environmental protection and climate action in UK ELT, joining, promoting and encouraging discussion.
- ii. Showcase and celebrate environmental projects and climate action across the industry.
- iii. Produce regular content on environmental topics to raise awareness and increase engagement.

OBJECTIVES

OUR INDUSTRY CONT.

17. ENCOURAGE AND FACILITATE A GREEN TRANSFORMATION ACROSS UK ELT

Our climate action will have the greatest success if we work together. To make changes appealing and easy, we will campaign for our UK ELT colleagues to take a series of specific actions throughout the year. We will:

- i. Work with the action group to define specific goals for industry wide campaigns, such as switching to renewable energy.
- ii. Run positive campaigns, each with a strong communications plan, engaging content, guidance and eye catching visuals.
- iii. Record, celebrate and promote changes, contributions and pledges as appropriate.
- iv. Share English UK's action and experiences around completing each goal (or equivalent) to lead by example.

18. PROMOTE GREEN UK ELT TO THE WORLD

People around the world are increasingly concerned about the environment. As we transform our industry through climate action, we must also promote and demonstrate our changes to connect with student values. Our environmental responsibility will give them another reason to choose UK ELT for their language learning. We will:

- i. Promote successful campaign results. See 17.
- ii. Develop promotional messaging around environmentalism and UK ELT as the green ELT movement develops.

19. ENCOURAGE AGENTS TO TAKE ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

English UK has an extensive agent and partner network. As part of using our platform to achieve wide reaching change, we must raise awareness and encourage environmental action among agents and partners. We will:

- i. Ask the environmental action group to develop environmental commitments for English UK partner agency rules/ code of conduct.
- ii. Run positive agent and student facing campaigns encouraging sustainable practice.
- iii. Include agent facing environmental content in relevant events.
- iv. Promote and celebrate environmental action and green credentials of our agents and partners.

20. LOBBY THE UK GOVERNMENT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION THAT SUPPORTS OUR INDUSTRY

There are some actions that ELT providers cannot achieve alone. Here English UK must fulfil its role as industry representative to speak up for the sector and lobby for supportive policy and action. We will:

- i. Campaign for supportive, green action from the UK government.
- ii. Develop a list of priorities in consultation with English UK members, e.g. extending unaccompanied minor travel; improved public transport and student/ group tickets; subsidised insulation; and other environmental investments for educators.
- iii. Engage and support members in lobbying and campaigning action around the UK.



OBJECTIVES AND BEYOND

Climate change and environmental destruction disproportionately affect poor people and marginalised people, and is also deepening inequalities.

We will work to improve the impact our actions have beyond our sector with complementing action plans focused on antiracism, inequality and oppression. Together they form English UK's corporate social responsibility plan.

21. DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT ACCOMPANYING ANTIRACISM AND EQUITY ACTION PLANS

The climate and environmental crises disproportionately harm poor, marginalised, disenfranchised and excluded people in the UK and around the world.

To take our environmentalism seriously, we must also address racism, discrimination, prejudice, inequality and oppression. Our approach ties what is good for people with what it good for our planet. We recognise that climate action is incomplete without climate justice. We will:

- i. Implement and develop our antiracism plan.
- ii. Develop a plan to play our part addressing discrimination, rights violations and equality.



ENSURING SUCCESS

FEEDBACK AND INPUT AT EVERY STEP

We will encourage and listen to feedback at every stage in our environmental work — through formal surveys and consultations, as well as welcoming thoughts and comments at any time.

Input from ELT colleagues will enable us to make informed decisions, take the most appropriate action and avoid wasting resources.

Starting with an initial survey in Q1 2022 to better understand the level of environmental and climate action in our industry, we will collect information about environmental impact and sustainability annually.

This way we will continually evaluate the effectiveness of our actions, identify mistakes and successes, identify new needs or challenges, and improve our work.

We will also share our actions, findings and plans openly so everyone can share comment.

REBUILDING TOGETHER FOR THE BETTER

UK ELT has been devastated by the impact of Covid-19. But the pandemic did not occur in a vacuum. It highlighted and exacerbated injustices in our society and gave us the opportunity to rebuild our industry for the better.

This environmental plan is part of our commitment to creating a fairer, safer and better industry for everyone. This means fighting discrimination in all its forms, working for international market recovery and becoming an antiracist organisation.

The aims of this plan are ambitious and its reach is wide. To work, we need a dedicated action group, support from all levels of the English UK team as well as across the membership.

Only by working together, offering constructive criticism and supporting one another will we be able to succeed. We hope you will join us however you can.



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