

What's it all about?

The big overview

Achieving **Net Zero** is arguably the defining challenge of the 21st century (Black et al, 2021), and education holds immense – yet still underutilised – potential to drive transformative change. Globally, climate change education is gaining momentum (Puttick, 2025; Wang et al. 2024), often driven by students' and teachers' demands for transformative change (Walshe et al., 2024). However, a significant **gap remains between high-level curriculum policy commitments and the day-to-day reality** in classrooms. The interdisciplinarity of climate knowledge (Hulme, 2024), its breadth, complexity and dynamism (Asbjørnsen et al. 2024), the politicised nature of Net Zero, and its contested relationship with justice (Zimm et al., 2024), and the deluge of low-quality information present challenges. There are **currently Zero mentions of Net Zero in the school curricula across the UK**. England is entering a key period of curriculum reform, and the wider political context, marked by weakening Net Zero commitments and delays to key milestones, adds urgency. What young people learn, and how they learn, about Net Zero will profoundly shape their ability generate political will, advocate for meaningful action.

Outputs and objective

From the stories, ideas, and contributions from teachers and advisors, our research team will draft, get feedback on, and publish the Oxford Net Zero Education Framework to support curriculum designers in creating meaningful and ambitious climate education for all.

Partners

This Sprint brings together a team of education and social sciences researchers, a **multi-disciplinary Expert Advisory Board**, the **David Ross Education Trust**, a **Youth Advisory Board**, and **policy partners**.

NetZeroEd: How can curriculum designers provide better Net Zero education for the next generation?

What will we do?

This is a multi-method study utilizing qualitative data sources. Our data collection strategy/methods are:

1. Figuring out what the literature says about Net Zero. In this way, we'll **conduct a scoping review** of literature on Net Zero **broadly** across education, policy, climate science, health, history, anthropology, etc.
2. We are carrying out **classroom visits** to Key Stage 3 classrooms in schools across England to **film teachers** teaching about climate change and Net Zero, in order to **learn best practices**.
3. To complement video footage of lessons, we will take **observational notes** while sitting in on those lessons.
4. We will also be conducting **1-1 interviews with teachers** to talk with them about their teaching approaches and challenges of teaching about Net Zero.
5. In addition to these interviews, we will ask teachers to share with us any **teaching materials and resources** to inform the framework of best practices for other teachers.

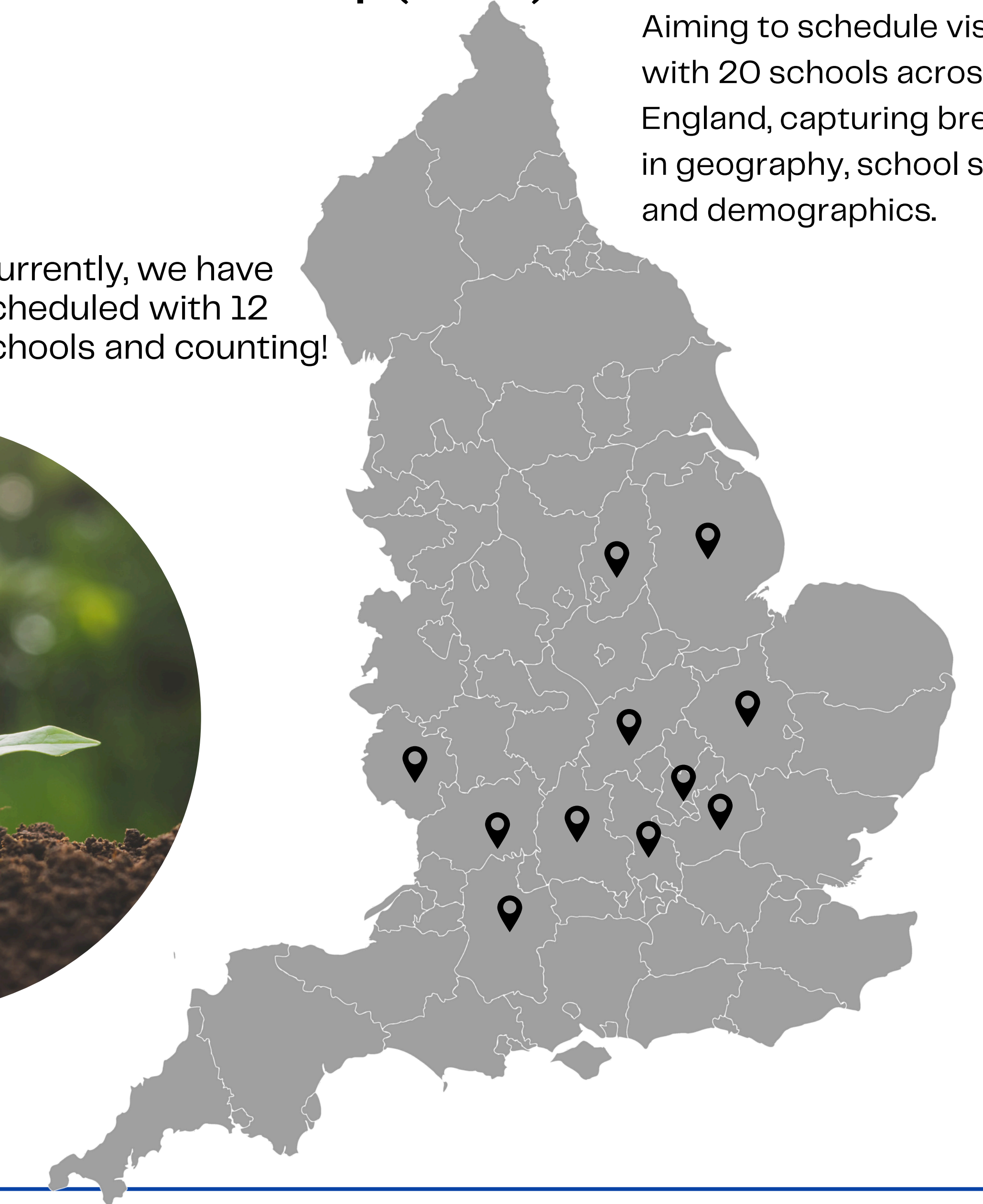
What is and Why Net Zero?

- What? Key points are: Net Zero refers to net zero emissions, notably, carbon dioxide and other green house gases, in order to mitigate climate change. It's a "balance between the release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and its removal into sinks" in order to limit " the rise in global average temperatures" (Fankhauser et al, 2022, p. 19)
- Why focus on it in education?
 - a. Future Proofing – Achieving Net Zero is widely understood as vital for humanity's future on earth.
 - b. Empowering Action – The active and solution-focused nature of Net Zero offers promising potential for empowering young people.
 - c. Navigating Complexity: Net Zero education is ideally positioned to help students develop skills to understand and navigate complex systems.
 - d. Public Reasoning – Net Zero is widely seen as the lens through which climate change and decarbonisation are viewed.
 - e. Fostering Justice – It enables students to examine vital questions about justice across a range of scales, fostering a deeper understanding of responsibility, fairness, and solidarity

Data collection map (so far)!

Currently, we have scheduled with 12 schools and counting!

Aiming to schedule visits with 20 schools across England, capturing breadth in geography, school size, and demographics.



Results so far ...

- It can be challenging for both teachers and students to define Net Zero – reflecting a broader lack of clarity/multi-definition use of the term in the literature
- "Net Zero isn't a term we use a lot"
- It may be hard to identify the key resources for teaching from those available
- Efforts to increase climate action within some schools are widespread – ecoclubs, sustainability strategies etc.
- In general, there is a strong interest in gaining knowledge on Net Zero and improving practice amongst teachers and students

Project Team



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Jo-Anne Baird Team Member	Helen Johnson Team Member	William Finnegan Team Member	Tina Fawcett Team Member
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Stuart Robinson Team Member	Tom Crawford Team Member	Mark Hiron Team Member	Grace Healy Team Member

What is a Youth Advisory Board?

Youth are an often-sidelined, illigitimized (by adult researchers, policy makers, and staff), and un-listened to group of people, we seek to include, and indeed learn from and be guided by, the ideas, critiques, and expert-thinking of youth in this project. The UK Youth Shadow Panel (curriculum review board led by youth) is a guiding light for this advisory group in our project. The YAB will be made up of 6th form students to advise us.



Let's share ideas!

Want to get involved? Have any opinions on Net Zero education to share? Please get in touch with us at

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more info here!



Natural Environment Research Council