

The kids are alright

Walthamstow student Franky Misku on what happened at the borough's Youth Climate Summit

Last month, I and a big group of other young people from nine of the borough's schools made our way to the town hall to show up for what we believe in. The Waltham Forest Youth Climate Summit took place on 12th November, at the same time as world leaders debated the fate of the earth in Glasgow at COP26. It was organised by the council and the borough's environment education centre - the Suntrap Forest Centre - and I and eight other students from Willowfield School were excited to take part.

Determined to do our bit to reduce emissions, we made sure to walk the half-hour journey to the town hall instead of using our school's minibus. The panel of speakers included council leader Grace Williams and Carolyn Axtell, from We Are Possible climate action group, who shared ways we can all reduce our carbon footprint.

I learnt that a person from the UK produces an average of 10 tonnes of CO₂ a year, which is over double the world's average! It really drove home for me how we should all try to do more – avoiding car journeys, recycling instead of throwing things away and thinking all the time about how much we consume.

Our group of 40 dedicated young people then split into groups to brainstorm ambitious ways to help the environment. My group worked on a plan to make food shopping more eco-friendly, reducing how far produce has to travel and getting rid of unnecessary packaging.

From my own experience in going to supermarkets, I have seen fruit and vegetables like bananas covered in plastic packaging, which is completely unnecessary and often cannot be re-used, meaning it will inevitably end up in a landfill. Supermarkets could choose to get their fruits and vegetables from local farmers, while individual people could try to grow their own food if they can.

Given an opportunity to ask questions of the panel, I asked the council and other organisations to consider supporting the borough's schools, teaching students how to grow fruit and vegetables and even creating their own in-school allotments. The summit was a very enjoyable experience and one I found really worthwhile. I and my fellow attendees will now be working hard to raise awareness amongst other students about climate change and how young people can do their bit