

## **Report from Education for the Future Conference held 12<sup>th</sup> October 2019 in London**

The conference was jointly organised by the NEU, UCU and NUS (National Union of Students) in response to the Climate Emergency which has been recognised by many local authorities including Barnsley. Several hundred people – teachers, lecturers and school and college students – came to the event.

It took place just two weeks after the Global Strike Day on September 20<sup>th</sup> which saw thousands of school and college students taking action to demand that governments develop policies to tackle the climate emergency. It was also the week when Extinction Rebellion were protesting in London.

Speakers at the opening and closing plenary sessions included Kevin Courtney, our General Secretary, and Douglas Chalmers, UCU President, as well as academics in the field of climate science, leaders of various projects, and activists from the school student network, Extinction Rebellion and the Labour Party. The message which came through powerfully was that we need to act quickly to end the climate crisis, and that the role of education and schools should be central to the campaign.

Most of the day was taken up with 3 workshop sessions. It was hard to choose which to go along to from the 29 different topics on offer! Workshops were organised around the three themes of the conference: “Curriculum, Activism, Education”. In the workshop on “From assembly to walkouts: what does solidarity with school strikes look like?” it was exciting to hear about the way school students had organised strike action, and how teachers in a range of schools had built support. Several workshops explored how green issues could become a central part of the curriculum, and others looked closely at the facts of climate change and how these could be presented to students. The workshop on climate refugees argued that the climate emergency will create more refugees and discussed how refugees can be welcomed into our communities and schools.

The day was stimulating and thought-provoking. Teachers gained a great deal from the discussions about what can be achieved in schools to tackle the climate issue and from the sharing of experiences in different areas. I hope that if there is a similar event regionally or nationally, we can encourage members in schools to be part of these crucial debates.

In Barnsley the trades council organised solidarity action with student strikes on 20<sup>th</sup> September and 29<sup>th</sup> November last year. Both days were well attended although there has not been student strike action in our town as yet. Further days of action have been called for February 14<sup>th</sup> and March 13<sup>th</sup>. I hope the NEU will again give support.

Fran Postlethwaite & Angela Harrod

Barnsley NEU

**Note:** Solidarity action on 14<sup>th</sup> February with student strikes will be from 4.15 to 5.15 outside Barnsley Town Hall.

Members are also encouraged to take selfies with solidarity placards and send them to the facebook page for Barnsley Action against Climate Crisis as well as the Barnsley NEU Facebook page BarnsleyNEU@barnsleyteachers and website. [https://neu.org.uk/site-search?search\\_api\\_fulltext=barnsley+district](https://neu.org.uk/site-search?search_api_fulltext=barnsley+district)