



Twinning: (CLIMATE LETTERS)

Urgent action is required from governments, businesses and individuals to reduce emissions to help limit global warming and the damage that this is already causing worldwide. The governmental response is being coordinated through talks at conferences such as COP26, but how are the businesses that are important to us locally responding?



Photo by Markus Spiske from Pexels

In this activity you and your students will:

- ▶ Learn about global warming and the UN COP conferences on climate change.
- ▶ Identify a locally important business that you can write a letter to in order to ask about the action they are taking to be more environmentally friendly.
- ▶ *Optional:* Share your letters and responses with your twinned school to learn more about their local employers and the action they are taking on the environment.

What do I need to make it work?

- ▶ Access to the web to find and research locally important businesses.
- ▶ Letter writing materials: either a computer with word-processing software and a printer or pens and paper.

What things will my students create?

- ▶ A short research file on a locally important business.
- ▶ Letters to send to the locally important business.

WHAT IS GLOBAL WARMING?

Global warming, also known as global heating, refers to the observed increase of average global temperature over time. Evidence shows this increase is almost solely due to the actions of humanity, in particular the vast amounts of greenhouse gases created since the start of the industrial era.

You have likely already introduced the concept of global warming and the climate change that this is driving to your class/group, but now is a good time to check their understanding if it is not fresh in their minds. The key points as regards this activity are:

- ▶ Global warming is a scientific fact, backed by evidence.
- ▶ Increasing global temperatures drives climate change and endangers humans and wildlife.
- ▶ We need to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that we create to keep these effects to a manageable level.

If you would like to spend more time on the basics of global warming and climate change then the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) produce a number of free resources and lesson plans which you can find here: bit.ly/3AzL4Nd

CLIMATE CHANGE AT THE UN: COP

The UN Climate Change Conferences of the Parties (COP) are meetings specifically about climate change, where representatives of countries across the world come together to discuss ways to limit global warming and mitigate the effects of climate change.

The first COP (COP1) took place in Berlin, Germany in 1995 and (with the exception of 2020) they have taken place yearly ever since. The COP conferences are known primarily as the birthplace of global agreements to tackle climate change – for example the **Kyoto protocol** (COP3, Kyoto, Japan, 1997 – bit.ly/3nWEr6f) and the **Paris Agreement** (COP21, Paris, France, 2015 – bit.ly/39uAbPZ).

The 2020 conference (COP26) was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and rescheduled for November 2021, in Glasgow, UK. One of the primary aims of COP26 is to commit countries to a plan to reach **global net zero emissions by the middle of this century in order to try and keep global warming to a maximum level of 1.5°C**. Net zero global emissions would mean that when we look at the world as a whole, the total amount of all greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere is offset by schemes that remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

Brainstorming exercise.

Can your students come up with different ways that we can achieve net zero emissions? Split their suggestions into two groups – ways to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases emitted in the first place and ways to offset those emissions that remain. The Wikipedia page on climate change mitigation is a good place to start researching on this topic: bit.ly/3AyPBI5

CHOOSE & RESEARCH A LOCALLY IMPORTANT BUSINESS

Governments can set goals, make policies and put in place penalties and incentives, but much of the implementation of these will need to be carried out by businesses.

What businesses are important in your area, and how are they responding to the climate emergency?

Choose the business

Before we write our letters asking businesses about their environmental action plans, we need to know where we are going to send them. For the purposes of this activity we recommend that you take the “think global, act local” approach – this means sending your letters to a business that is important to your local area.

We have deliberately used the phrase “locally important business” in this activity rather than “local business”. This is because “local business” is often interpreted as meaning “small local business” whereas we are referring to e.g. a large business that is a large employer or otherwise economically important in your area, regardless of where the headquarters of that business is based. For example, BP is a “locally important business” in Aberdeen, Scotland even though its headquarters are in London, and Procter & Gamble is an American company that is locally important in Reading, England.



Bill Harrison / BP North Sea Headquarters

For this step, you should choose a business that is locally important wherever you are. If your students are younger or you have limited time then this could be chosen in advance by you, or you could ask the students to make suggestions and do some initial research themselves before deciding on the business you will write to as a class (perhaps with vote?). For example, you could ask the class where their family members work, or search on the internet to find the largest employers or biggest businesses in your area.

Research the business

Having chosen the business it's time for the students to do some research and put together a small fact-file on it. We'll use some of the information we find in our letter in the next step.

The fact-file should be concise, but cover at least the following topics:

- ▶ Company name.
- ▶ Location of local, country and worldwide headquarters.
- ▶ What does the company make, or what services does it provide?

- ▶ Why is the company locally important?
- ▶ What, if anything, can you find out about their current environmental policies and past performance?
- ▶ An address to send your letter to. We would recommend either the local or country headquarters.

Some places to look for this information include:

- ▶ Company website. Note that larger companies might have both consumer websites (that sell things or give information on their products) and corporate websites (which give information on the company itself). Try searching for “«company name» corporate” or “«company name» investors”.
- ▶ Local and national newspaper archives (usually available online).
- ▶ Wikipedia.

Tip: Many news websites use ‘tags’ to categorise their stories. Try and find one story about the company you are researching on their website using their search function, then look for the tag with the company name (often at the end of the article). Click on the tag for an archive of all their stories on that company. For example, here is The Guardian’s archive on Procter & Gamble:

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/proctergamble>

WRITE YOUR LETTERS

Now you’ve done the background research, it’s time to write your letter asking the company how it is addressing global warming. You could either put together a single letter from your group that everyone signs or each student could write and send their own.

Tip: If the students have not previously written a formal letter you may find this article on BBC Bitesize useful to help introduce them to the basic concept: [bbc.in/3o7KmVZ](https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/guides/z9nqkq/revision/1/1)

Who to address your letter to?

It can be difficult to determine a particular person that your letter should be sent to, but with the aid of your research you can likely determine a job title to use in your letter. For example, if you researched Procter & Gamble you would find that their environmental efforts are outlined under the heading “sustainability” and they use the term “officer” in a lot of their job titles, so you could address your letter to “Chief Sustainability Officer”



Photo by Andrea Piacquadio from Pexels

What should your letter contain?

Exactly what is in the letter is up to you, but one possible structure would be:

1. Introduce yourself/the group and say why you are writing. You might want to reference e.g. the goals of COP26 or the Paris Agreement.
2. Demonstrate you have done your research by referencing some of the projects that are already underway at the business.
3. Ask for further information about specific actions being taken in your local area/at the national level (whatever is appropriate to the business you have chosen).
4. Thank the person in advance for any response they may send.

Asking for publishing permission

If you want to post a mission update about your letters on the Roots & Shoots website you should make sure that you ask the person you are contacting if they are OK for you to publish their response.

If they do not wish for their response to be published (or do not expressly include permission to publish their response) then this will not affect your chances of winning a prize, but you must not include their full response in your post on the website. You can, however, include a general summary of their response (such as “the company responded kindly to our enquiries and suggested a number of ways that they would be looking to improve their carbon emissions in the future”).

Here is some text that you can use in your letter to ask for publishing permission:

We would love to share your response to this letter on the Jane Goodall’s Roots & Shoots UK website at www.rootsnshoots.org.uk as part of a blog post our school/class/youth group (delete as appropriate) is writing about the importance of taking action to limit global warming and how businesses are tackling this problem. Please can you indicate in your response if you are willing to allow publication in this manner.

SHARE YOUR PROJECT WITH YOUR TWINNED SCHOOL

Learn more about businesses that operate near your twinned school in the UAE and how they are tackling global warming.

Not in the twinning programme yet?

If your school/youth group is already a member of Jane Goodall's Roots & Shoots then you can learn more about the twinning programme and sign up here: bit.ly/39pcnzZ

Not a member? Sign up for Jane Goodall's Roots & Shoots here: rootsnshoots.org.uk/sign-me-up

Sharing the findings from your project via video conference with your twinned school is a great way to get to know more about your twinned school and the businesses near them at the same time.

Teachers/group leaders should coordinate with their opposite number ahead of time to decide an exact format, video conferencing method and timings that suit the ages of the students and available technologies as this will differ from case-to-case.

Running your video conference

Below is an outline of one suggested way to plan and run your video conference which you can adapt to your particular situation.

1. **First, choose a technology.** For example, you might want to consider Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet or WhatsApp. Is there a common technology that both schools are already familiar with?
2. **Make a test call between the teachers.** If at all possible, use the same accounts (for services that require a login) and equipment (computer/webcam/etc.) as you intend using for the full class call.
3. **Set a date and time for your video conference.** Plan to keep it short – video conferences can quickly become tiring, especially for younger students. If you are working with older students and want more time for each school to present then consider scheduling 2 shorter sessions rather than 1 long session.
4. **Plan the conference schedule.** One way to think about this is to split the planned length of your session into 4 quarters.
 - a. Quarter 1 is for introductions and getting over any technology teething problems.
 - b. Quarter 2 is for one school to present.
 - c. Quarter 3 is for the other school to present.
 - d. Quarter 4 is for wrapping up. It's good practice to be able to shorten any planned wrap up so that you can absorb any overruns from the presentations without going over time.
5. **Plan and practise your presentation.** You will likely want to include:
 - a. Which local business was chosen and why.
 - b. What you found out with your company research.
 - c. What you asked the business in the letter(s) you sent.
 - d. The response(s) that you received, if any.
 - e. Time for a couple of questions from the other school.

KEEP UP TO DATE WITH JANE GOODALL'S ROOTS & SHOOTS IN THE UK

You can find us on the web at www.rootsnshoots.org.uk, on Facebook at fb.com/RootsnShoots.org.uk, on Twitter (@JaneGoodallUK, direct link: goo.gl/xTQnVm) and on Instagram (@janegoodalluk, direct link: bit.ly/jgi-insta). Or why not sign up for our weekly email newsletter full of inspiring stories from our Roots & Shoots members in the UK at rootsnshoots.org.uk/sign-me-up/

WANT TO HELP IMPROVE THIS ACTIVITY?

This activity is a living document! Please help us by editing this activity to make it as good as possible. You can edit it by using this short link (just type it into your web browser's address bar): bit.ly/3oaxlv5 – full instructions are provided. Any edits that can make this resource easier to use are very welcome, so please follow the link and make your contribution!