

# RIYPLD

Raising & Inspiring Youth into  
Public Life through Dialogue



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Erasmus+ Programme  
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# Newsletter

Issue 2 • August 2021

## What do you know about your local MP?



Stephen Farry kindly joined the RIYPLD project to tell us about a day in the life as an MP. Stephen has been the Alliance MP since December 2019. We had a riveting Q&A session ranging from his thoughts on a potential border poll to the culling of invasive species.

To find out who your MP is and more about what they do, go to:

[members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP](https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP)

## MLA Rachel Woods joins the RIYPLD Project!



We started our RIYPLD Erasmus+ Youth Project in December 2020. Take a look at our first newsletter to learn more about these sessions).

For our third session we were privileged to be joined by MLA for North Down Rachel Woods. Rachel took us through the work of Assembly Committees. Rachel is a member of the Green Party. She spoke about her passion for the environment and encouraged the participants to join her on local litter picks which she engages in regularly across the Borough. As well as her environmental work Rachel has been working hard on

campaigning for The Domestic Abuse Bill. The Bill will ensure tougher custodial sentences where a child has been impacted by abuse, as well as additional reporting requirements.

Rachel said, “This legislation is much needed and long overdue. Domestic abuse has always had an insidious effect on society but incident rates have escalated during the pandemic.”

Rachel also gave us an insight into the day in the life of an MLA and what impact she can have. This was followed by a Q&A where the participants quizzed Rachel on a variety of different topics including how MLAs are supporting town centres and the impact of Covid 19 on the mental health of young people as well as larger issues around how MLAs can impact on human rights issues.

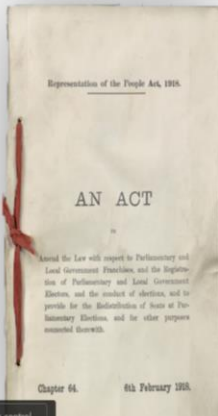
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## RIYPLD goes to London

## What is a SpAd?

### Legislation



Well not quite! Unfortunately due to Covid we have not been able to make our trip to London yet but fingers crossed we will do this later in the year.

Instead Fiona from the Parliamentary Outreach Team joined our zoom session.

Fiona quizzed us on our knowledge of the House of Commons and House of Lords.

Did you know anyone could become a Lord? Or that there are not enough seats for all MPs in the House of Commons?

Me neither!



By *Evan Fleming*

Being part of the RIYPLD programme has helped me learn a lot more about how to get into a career in politics. There are so many roles I had never heard of for example the role of Special Advisor (SpAd). The RIYPLD Project invited Peter Martin to speak to the participants about his role as SpAd to the Education Minister Peter Weir.

The minister is allowed to appoint whoever they want to the position meaning that SpAd's have a very special position within the civil service. It also means that their job is not secure and if the Minister loses their job their SpAd may also lose their job.

This happened shortly after our session with Peter. Peter Weir Education Minister lost his position with the change up of the DUP leadership. However the new Education Minister Michelle McIlveen decided to retain Peter Martin as SpAd as he is very knowledgeable. It has been an incredibly difficult time for people in Education during the pandemic, whether or not to keep schools open and how best to support teaching staff where some of the issues that Peter had to

unexpectedly deal with. He gave us very honest insights into the role saying he is sometimes on the phone to Headmasters late at night on how best to implement safe procedures in their school.

Peter also told us about some of the many positive aspects of his role like being able to allocate funding to schools to provide extra laptops for students in need during the pandemic so they could continue to study from home.

It was a fascinating insight into the life of a SpAd and the work that goes on behind the scenes in education.

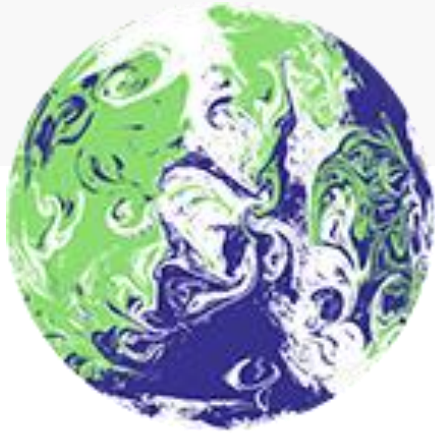
## What to share your views?

Do you want to share your views on something which is affecting your life? Or is there something you think the world needs to know? Why not write an article for our RIYPLD Newsletter. Each issue we'll give an opportunity for two young people to speak up and share an issue which is important to them.

To get involved email:  
evan@kilcooleywomenscentre.co.uk

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# Code RED for Climate



## By Heather Mason

This summer has brought another episode of extreme weather that scientists have now concluded is irreversible. A record breaking heat wave saw temperatures rise to as high as 46 degrees Celsius brought on by man-made climate change. Elsewhere there were floods in parts of Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands that have killed at least 196 people. Episodes that used to come once in a millennium are now a much more frequent occurrence.

Described as “code red for humanity” the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that due to major changes in the global temperature there will be devastating consequences for all life on Earth. This makes cutting greenhouse gases all the more urgent. The report estimates that the world has a 50% chance of halting warming only if it can reach net zero emissions by the middle of the century that is only 29 years away. This would require a rapid decline in emissions.

Scientists argue that this is doable. There are many alternatives to fossil fuels such as hydroelectricity and solar energy. What is preventing the shift is not that we lack the technology but that we lack the political will power to make this happen. Fossil fuel

companies are very powerful, this along with the politics of all nations committing to lowering their emissions with scarce financial resources mean the political obstacles are huge. COP 26 – The UN Climate Talks will happen in the Autumn in Glasgow. This gives nation states an opportunity to define commitments and work through their issues.

But we must put pressure on our national government to ensure we play our part in reducing the impact of climate change. Yet warnings often fall on deaf ears. Many people reject climate change as they don't feel its impact. The most vulnerable people in the world are at most risk currently and yet these are the people who have contributed least to climate change. But nowhere is safe not even the UK with its milder climate. The most vulnerable people in our society are already impacted by climate change, for instance increased pollution has caused an increase in people with asthma and an increase in exasperated asthma attacks.

Therefore we cannot afford to wait to act against the threat of climate change. We must work together to protect our planet for everyone today and for future generations. COP26 will bring together world leaders to commit to urgent global climate action.

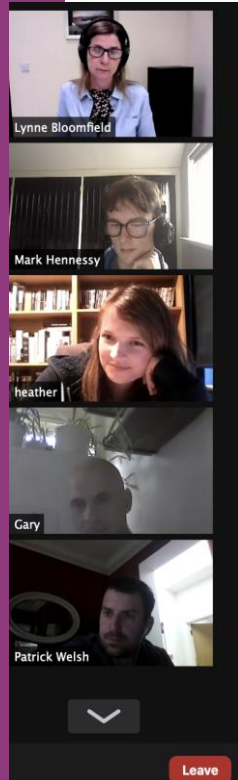
But each of us has a part to play. In the lead up to the summit, there will be opportunities for businesses, civil society groups, schools and people across the UK to join the conversation on tackling climate change.

[#OneStepGreener](#) will showcase how people from all over the UK are already doing their bit on climate change, from the engineers creating offshore wind farms to powering our homes and businesses, to local initiatives encouraging children and parents to walk to school. Let's celebrate them and inspire more to join a mass movement of green steps across the country in the lead up to COP26, showing how small actions culminate in large collective action.



# Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who was part of our virtual project, we would love to have had you in person but we appreciate all the time and effort you put into making our zoom sessions what they were during this difficult year.



# Up Next....



But it's not over yet! As part of the RIYPLD project we will be organising some trips to visit the people and places we learnt about during our online sessions. We look forward to taking up our invite to view the Ards and North Down Council and Assembly to see these places in action.

We are also planning an exciting trip to another part of the UK to learn about other devolved governments and have some fun too. If you are aged between 16 and 30 and would like to be a participant in these trips please get in touch at: [info@kilcooleywomenscentre.co.uk](mailto:info@kilcooleywomenscentre.co.uk) or ring 91478292 for more information.

For more information:

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