

BLOG:

ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD!

————— **Kate Sullivan**



Earlier this year, I was patiently doing my very best to encourage my teenage son to revise for his mocks when he said “What’s the point? It’s not like I’ll be able to afford my own home and we’re all going die from Climate Change anyway.” Needless to say, I was both horrified and heart broken and Ok a part of me did think perhaps he was just being flippant to dodge his revision but even still, it really got me thinking. By the nature of my job, you would expect me to be interested in the natural world but just lately, when I reflected on my son’s comments, I realised that I had been checking out. My morning browse through my news app has been swapped for a lazy scroll through YouTube shorts!

On the one hand news agencies and environmental groups have done the most amazing Job of informing us about climate change, habitat loss and a whole raft of environmental challenges but, do you know what..... I’m over informed on these issues -I GET WHAT THE PROBLEM IS!!!! It is no wonder then that a Woodland Trust survey found 65% of adults¹ are worried about climate change and that this figure is even higher amongst young people. I don’t want to know about political promises or global pacts -it’s too remote and outside of my control. What I really feel I need to know and want to know is ‘what **I** can do

¹ [Young People's Climate Anxiety Soaring - Woodland Trust](#)

right **now**'. What I want is **hope**, and some sense of control – a little more can do if you please!

Yes, we need to make massive amounts of changes but let's take a different view. Sustainable lifestyles shouldn't focus on loss rather what we gain. Change that makes us feel good, hopeful and change that is easy and fun! After talking with my son and reading headlines of raging eco anxiety amongst teens and young people, I feel adults have a moral responsibility to gift our young people some hope... and fun too!

A recent visit to a school furthered my thinking on this. Change needs to be relevant and specific to young peoples lives. I hate to say it, but recycling milk bottles just isn't going to cut it, a prom however is an altogether different consideration. The leavers prom is a ubiquitous feature on most school's calendars. The end of stressful exams, the transition from uniform clad children to young adults and the promise of a long, and hopefully gloriously sunny summer. It is a hotly anticipated celebratory rite of passage which is keenly awaited by school staff and students alike. On the surface, the promise of limousines, sharp suits and glittery prom gowns can be utterly thrilling and all *consuming*. But, underneath the bright lights, sequins and fake lashes there is another measure of consumption which is altogether much more troubling.

In an age where we are more and more aware of the ramifications of climate change, resource inefficiency and biodiversity loss due to humans' insatiable desire to consume and purchase, the idea of a 'prom do' can feel a little...well, privileged and careless. Let's face it, prom night dresses are famous for being worn once and never seen again -a night of glory enabled by synthetic materials, glitter and sequins. Aside from the microplastic polluting potential of such materials, the energy and transportation carbon footprint alone for this single use item feels indulgent.

However, 'prom dos' offer an opportunity. Often, they are organised in school by young people for young people meaning they have the power to make change in their hands!² In these settings, young people are surrounded by adults and teachers who are committed to their education, development and welfare both academically and emotionally. Children and young people need to be educated and supported to confidently make sustainable decisions which

² <https://carbonliteracy.com/climate-change-mental-health-addressing-eco-anxiety/>

help mitigate climate change and resource depletion through informed smart savvy choices.

So, if you too are all about 'can do' we'd love to hear from you. We are looking for companies to partner us in creating a sustainable prom guide for young people. An honest guide which does talk about the 'issues' but, importantly, spends way more time talking about intelligent sustainable choices for prom wear, beauty, transport, venues, decorations and food. Changing mindsets from one of restriction, loss and worry to one which is hopeful and joyful about the future because they are better informed and better supported to take their first steps in navigating a life that will require them to think creatively and 'do different' to ensure a safe and secure future for all.

Let's choose hope. Let's do something remarkable!
