

insider

Royals make a world of difference

The royal family have embraced the green cause but are speeches and prizes enough? **Kerry Parnell** reports

Prince William speaks at the Earthshot Prize awards ceremony last Sunday; The Queen (inset) has long been a frugal recycler. Pictures: Getty

The royal family has gone green, literally turning Buckingham Palace emerald earlier this month, to celebrate Prince William's Earthshot Prize Awards.

Such is their commitment to climate change, they've edged Greta Thunberg off the headlines and are fronting up as a family to the COP26 summit in Glasgow, on October 31, with the Queen, Prince Charles and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, Prince William and Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge scheduled to attend.

Delegates better be ready — the monarch was overheard in Cardiff recently expressing her frustration at inaction, saying, "It's really irritating when they talk, but they don't do."

Charles spoke at a UN biodiversity conference in China, where he attempted to convince the world's biggest polluter to change. He told the BBC, he is "keen to get the damn thing sorted".

President Xi Jinping invited the future king to visit China and speak to CEOs about climate change next year.

Charles also said how proud he is of William for furthering a cause he has backed for 50 years.

"I am very proud of my son, William, for his growing commitment to the environment and the bold ambition of the Earthshot Prize," he posted on Instagram alongside a sweet picture of father and son hugging. "As a world, we need to come together to inspire, reimagine and build the sustainable



Naturalist Chris Packham at a rally outside Buckingham Palace urging the royals to reward their estates.

future we so desperately need." Critics, of course, point out the royal family inevitably has a large carbon footprint thanks to running multiple palaces, homes and castles and frequent travel in private and commercial airlines.

And while some argue the royals should be doing a lot more, eco campaigners have welcomed William's initiative and the united effort of the royal family.

JFK's daughter Caroline Kennedy said it was "a great tribute to President Kennedy that The Earthshot Prize has been inspired by his Moonshot to take on the most important challenge we face today — repairing the planet."

"Prince William's Earthshot Prize is inspiring, energetic, visionary, global and full of solutions," say Aimee Higgins and Sonia Lakshman, founders of Couch to Carbon Zero.

"It's exactly what the world needs right now."

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royals not in perfection but as a platform," they say, "to speak up, inform, inspire, bring together and lead by example."

Prince Harry, who is also continuing his environmental campaigning through his

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Archewell foundation, recently wrote an opinion piece in the Washington Post criticising a Canadian oil company's plans to drill in the Okavango River Basin in southern Africa.

"There is no way to repair the damage from these kinds

of mistakes," he wrote. He also backs travel company Travalyt, which promotes sustainable travel, while attracting criticism for taking private jets when he travels.

It's a dilemma many A-listers face when they campaign on the environment, but supporters argue they have a position in the public eye to effect big change.

"We need to focus on what people are doing versus what they are not," say Higgins and Lakshman.

Buckingham Palace says: "The Royal Household is working hard across operations in the Royal Palaces and Estates to reduce its impact on the environment, using everything from energy efficient LED (light-emitting diode) lighting to hydro-electricity generating plants to ensure efficient running of its sites." Waste is recycled, including computer equipment, which is sent to the developing world through Computer Aid and gardens

and forests are carefully cultivated to encourage wildlife, wildflowers and bees.

Prince Charles has championed the cause for half a century. "The Prince has promoted sustainability to ensure that the natural assets upon which we all depend among other things soil, water, forests, a stable climate and fish stocks endure

for future generations," Clarence House states.

"The Prince uses his position to help raise public awareness about sustainability challenges and solutions through his speeches, articles, books and films. He is also Patron of a wide range of organisations working for sustainability, offering support and encouragement for their work."

"For our own survival we desperately need the rest of the Natural World, with which we are intimately interconnected, but which we have been taught to exploit and dominate as something separate from ourselves," Charles said previously, adding, "It has given me great pride to see how both my sons, in different ways, have taken up the cause of restoring the balance of Nature."

But is it enough? British naturalist Chris Packham, says he would like to see the royal family step up by rewilding their estates.

"We need more grand and

meaningful action," he told BBC Radio. "The Royal Family are global celebrities, they have a great reach and a great influence. I think that at this point... we need a real demonstration of some action."

It's also an issue the royal family has held dear for years.

Prince Philip was passionate about the cause from an early age.

"He was right there at the beginning at a time when conservation didn't mean much to many people," Sir David Attenborough said when his friend passed away earlier this year.

"Even in the 1950s and '60s, he saw it universally."

Philip founded both the World Wildlife Fund for Nature and the Australian Conservation Foundation and once said, "We depend on every other living thing on this planet, just as much as they depend on us. If we as humans have got this power of life and death, not just life and death but extinction and survival, we ought to exercise it with some sort of moral sense."

Meanwhile, the Queen is famously keen on recycling, well-known for preferring to make do and mend, rather than replace, on everything from her Barbour jackets and shoes to bed linen and home decor.

When the royal yacht Britannia was decommissioned in 1997, she sent all the bedspreads to Balmoral to be used in her holiday home. According to an insider, when they wore out, she ordered them to be cut them up and used as cushion covers.

Well, every little helps.