

ISSUES ACTION PLAN: Environmental Education

1. AIMS OF ACTION PLAN

Education normally implies a systematic learning process through a course of instruction or teaching. It involves a growth in knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge. Environmental education is widely understood to include elements of knowledge, skills and values and is expected to result in changed behaviour. The scope of environmental education has been widening over the past three decades, and this is described well in the report to Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) by the Panel for Education for Sustainable Development on 14 September 1998 as follows:

‘Education for sustainable development is not new. It has roots in environmental education, which has evolved since the 1960s, and in development education which first emerged in the 1970s, and also links with a number of related approaches to education which stress relevance to personal, social, economic and environmental change. In the past decade these approaches have increasingly found commonality under the label of ‘education for sustainable development’ and there is a strengthening consensus about the meaning and implication of this approach for education as a whole’.

And,

‘Education for sustainable development enables people to develop the knowledge, values and skills to participate in decisions about the way we do things individually and collectively, both locally and globally, that will improve the quality of life now without damaging the planet for the future’.

1.1. Education for Biodiversity

This should consider the following issues:

The objectives of the original Convention on Biodiversity at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. These were:

- the conservation of biodiversity
- the sustainable use of resources
- a fair and equitable sharing of genetic resources.

The meaning of biodiversity. It includes the elements outlined in the Nature Conservation Strategy for Birmingham - ‘Biodiversity is the variety of life we see around us. It includes every sort of animal, plant, fungus and microscopic life. It embraces the great variety of species, the genes those species carry, and the places where those species live. There are three distinct levels of biodiversity: diversity between and within ecosystems and habitats, diversity of species, and genetic variation within individual species’.

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The relationship between the cultural diversity of people throughout the world and biodiversity, and the implications of the developing global economy.

Why nature conservation is important. This is outlined very well in both the Birmingham and the Black Country Nature Conservation Strategies. (See page 2 in the Birmingham Strategy and page 6 in the Black Country Strategy).

The key principles are:

- maintaining the natural balance;
- the usefulness of nature to people;
- the beauty of nature;
- the value of nature in its own right.

1.2. Who are the potential environmental educators?

- Educational institutions and associated professional bodies, e.g. National Association for Environmental Education (NAEE) and Council for Environmental Education (CEE);
- Adult and community educators;
- Environmental education centres - run by LEAs and voluntary organisations;
- Park and countryside ranger services, including events programmes, interpretive leaflets, and visitor centres;
- The Birmingham Nature Centre;
- Statutory bodies, e.g. English Nature, Environment Agency, British Waterways Board;
- Voluntary conservation bodies, e.g. Wildlife Trusts, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV);
- Green campaign groups e.g. Friends of the Earth; Greenpeace;
- Schools, colleges and universities;
- Businesses concerned with green issues, e.g. the Midland Environment Business Club;
- The Media: magazines, newspapers, and broadcast media.

1.3. Where is the Biodiversity we want to educate people about?

Literally everywhere. We have wildlife all around us throughout the fabric of our community as well as in special sites. Our everyday life not only affects the wildlife around us but in varying degrees, wildlife across the planet.

1.4. Who do we want to educate?

- All branches of local government - members and officers.
- Any landowner and manager e.g. health trusts, educational institutions, Rail Track, the Highways Agency, housing associations, business and industry.
- Educators of all age groups.
- The general public.

- Environment professionals - statutory and voluntary.
- Young people, through teachers and youth leaders.
- Special interest groups like local history societies.
- National government who can create protective legislation and fund conservation initiatives.

1.5. **How do we deliver environmental education?**

Identify possible partners e.g. Friends of the Earth; British Trust for Ornithology; Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; Groundwork; Butterfly Conservation Society; Midlands Environment Business Club; the Black Environment Network (BEN), and the Environment Trainers Network (ETN). This will include trainers in the formal and informal sector.

Promote and provide training in biodiversity issues for professionals, volunteers and the general public.

Inform each group mentioned in 1.2 and 1.4 about Biodiversity Action Plans, providing appropriate material in each case, e.g. summaries of Biodiversity Action Plans tailored for each group.

Provide people who want to protect wildlife on a local site with appropriate information and advice including ideas for action.

Work with the National Curriculum, and develop educational programmes designed to explore biodiversity issues:

- use a variety of media;
- broadcast media and newspapers;
- special events;
- printed materials tailored for specific organisations or groups of people;
- computers (e.g. the 'National Grid for Learning') and EcoRecord;
- education programmes and activities;
- exhibitions.

2. **CURRENT ACTION**

Environmental Education is now being seen as including Education for Sustainability and it is under this heading that it is likely to be identified in the current review of the National Curriculum. Education for sustainability currently has no statutory status.

LA21 Working Group Reports.

Publication of The First Annual Report in 1998 from The Education for Sustainable Development Panel - chaired by Sir Geoffrey Holland. It includes in Annex 4, a

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submission to the Qualification and Curriculum Authority as the Panel's contribution to the National Curriculum Review. (See Introduction).

Environmental issues continue to be widely aired in the media.

Birmingham and the Black Country Boroughs have provision for environmental education - environmental education centres and visitor centres, education advisers, park or countryside services which run events programmes and publish leaflets.

Awareness promotion by business (Midland Environment Business Club).

Schools continue to show an interest in environmental issues, for example by developing their grounds and by conducting environmental audits. There are schemes to support schools in this process, e.g. 'EcoSchools' and the Shell Better Britain Campaign. The existing curriculum in schools presents many opportunities to develop awareness of biodiversity issues.

Voluntary Sector groups such as the RSPB Visitor Centre; Wildlife Trust Centre of the Earth; Wildside Centre in Wolverhampton, together with CSV Environment which works with school mostly in the Saltley and Small Heath area of Birmingham, all deliver and support programmes of work related to biodiversity.

Wolverhampton MBC in partnership with the Wildlife Trust is running the Natural Curriculum Project.

Walsall MBC in partnership with the Wildlife Trust is running a Neighbourhood Nature Project.

3. EFFECTIVENESS OF CURRENT ACTION

Much environmental education activity is happening over a wide area. In the absence of monitoring it is difficult to know to what extent formal environmental education is a contributor to the current levels of public awareness.

The frequency of nature programmes on television is an indication of the high level of public interest in nature, but only a minority of programmes cover the wildlife of urban areas. This reinforces the concept that nature is something to be seen 'somewhere else' rather than in one's own back yard. Biodiversity issues are generally not explored in depth.

The way in which public open space, private gardens and other open space are maintained suggests that we do not as a whole feel comfortable with nature unless it is well controlled. Most people seem to like the idea of nature, but tend to be less enthusiastic about it in their own back yard. This is demonstrated by the widespread use of terms like 'waste ground', 'wilderness' and 'brownfield site', all of which carry pejorative overtones.

There is still a widespread feeling that nature should be restricted to certain sites or areas. This suggests that we have a long way to go in learning to live with nature.

4. LEGAL ASPECTS, RESEARCH AND GUIDANCE

The major legislation and policy guidance relating to environmental education in Birmingham and the Black Country is set out in Appendix 1.

5. ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

Objective	Target
1. Promote wider public awareness of Biodiversity, sustainability and the role of Biodiversity Action Plans.	Ongoing
2. To develop partnerships for the implementation of Biodiversity Action Plans.	Ongoing
3. Develop a review process	Ongoing

6. Proposed action with partners to meet objectives

ACTION	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR							Meets objective number
	Lead	Partner	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2011	
6.1 Policy and legislation										
Include reference to environmental education requirements within UDPs and/ or other policy documents.	LAs	WT	As UDPs and other policy documents are prepared.							1,2
Include reference to environmental education requirements within LEAPs and/ or other policy documents.	EA	LAs/ WT	As LEAPs and other policy documents are prepared.							1,2
6.2 Site / species safeguard and management										
Promote survey projects e.g. garden and park surveys and basic training to enable public survey projects e.g. garden birds.	LAs/ WT	NNP, RSPB, Wildside Centre.	•							1
Promote training for recorders/ surveyors.	LAs, WT, EN	NNP, Educ.		•						1
6.3 Advisory										
Incorporate Biodiversity concepts and Action Plan information into WildlifeTrust education programme and projects (including NCP and NNP)	WT	LAs		•						1
Set up a Biodiversity Action Plan Issues Working Group.	LAs	EN, WT	•							1

ACTION	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR							Meets objective number
	Lead	Partner	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2011	
6.4 Future research and monitoring										
Develop monitoring and review through an Issues / Education Working Group.	LAs	EN/ WT		•						
6.5 Communications and Publicity										
Seek funding for developing and printing leaflets about Biodiversity Action Plans and related issues tailored for specific sectors	LAs	EN/ WT	•							1
Seek funding for telephone inquiry service and to develop the Wildlife Trust's Website	LAs	WT		•						1
Promote training in biodiversity issues for educators.	LAs	EN, WT		•						1
Develop and use existing networks to share information	LAs	WMEN	•							2
Work with the Neighbourhood Nature Project and the Natural Curriculum Project.	LAs (Walsall & Wolverhampton)	WT	•							2
Promote conferences on the theme of: 'Education and Nature'.	LAs	WT, LCG			•					3
Seek to integrate review with the LA21 Process.	LAs	WMEN	•							3
Develop monitoring and review through an Issues / Education Working Group.	LAs	EN			•					3
6.6 Links to other action plans										
This action plan has links to all other action										

plans										
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7. **CO-ORDINATION AND REVIEW.**

This Biodiversity Action Plan will be implemented over 10 years with a first review after 5 years. A group will be set up to co-ordinate implementation and to report to the Biodiversity Steering Group. This group will meet at a minimum on a yearly basis.

Review will be carried out in conjunction with related Habitat and Species Action Plans as appropriate.

Review will consist of measuring achievement of targets. The group will, with the support of the Steering Group, develop and implement appropriate monitoring methods which will inform the review process.

The Action Plan will be revised and updated in the light of review results and any relevant changes in circumstances and/or additional information which becomes available during the review period.

In line with national guidance, the Steering Group will report to the UK Steering Group.

Appendix 1: Legal Aspects, Research and Guidance.

The major legislation and policy guidance relating to the protection of wildlife in Birmingham and the Black Country is set out below.

Legal Aspects.

National Curriculum Guidance Note 7 identifies environmental education as a 'cross-curricular theme'. It is non-statutory. However, education for sustainability is now under discussion in the National Curriculum Review due to report in 2000.

The importance of Environmental Education is recognised in both the Birmingham and the Black Country Nature Conservation Strategies.

Existing Guidance

- Local Agenda 21 Working Group Reports 1198 and 1999.
- Local Authority Guidance, e.g. 'Success for Everyone: Education for Sustainability', published by Birmingham in 1998.
- 'Teaching Environmental Matters through the National Curriculum' 1996.
- Birmingham and Black Country Nature Conservation Strategies
- DfEE publications and circulars.
- Publications from voluntary sector conservation groups and from Learning through Landscapes.
- Publications from the National Association for Environmental Education (NAEE) and Council for Environmental Education (CEE) e.g. 'Education for Biodiversity' (CEE).
- Our Ecological Footprint: Reducing human impact of the Earth. Mathis Wackernagel and William Rees, New Society Publishers, 1996
- The Greening of the Cities, David Nicholson-Lord, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987.
- People, Plants and Places, Julian Agyeman, Southgate Publishers Ltd. 1995.

Research.

- Jacklyn Johnston 'Nature Areas for City People' published by the London Ecology Unit, 1990
- Millward, A. 1998. People and Nature in Cities, published by Urban Wildlife 1(3).