

**Some thoughts on the role of  
Higher Education Institutions within  
the Regional Education for  
Sustainable Development Group  
(East Midlands)**

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## Outline

1. Introduction
2. Background to the Regional Group
  - Origins and progress
  - The role of HE in the regional network.
3. Sustainable Development: A flag of convenience?
4. Broadening the Corporate Social Responsibility agenda in universities.

## **2. Background to the Regional Group**

## Origins and Progress

Education for Sustainable Development initiatives have had quite a long gestation in the East Midlands. Probably going back as far as 1994 when The Government Office for the East Midlands initiated a Regional Environmental Education Forum.

The network which has been involved in the organization of today's conference and which we are discussing today, the ***Regional Education for Sustainable Development Group (East Midlands)***, involved the bringing together of two more recent initiatives.

- a) An informal group which first met in December 2004, loosely connected to the East Midlands Regional Assembly's Promoting Sustainable Development Group.
- b) A second initiative formed to look into setting up a UN Regional Centre for Expertise (RCE) for ESD in the East Midlands. First meeting held in December 2005.

## Origins and Progress

- The First joint meeting of the Regional Education for Sustainable Development Group (East Midlands) took place on the 16th May 2006.
- A variety of sub-groups were established at a follow-up meeting in Loughborough on July 19th (Coordination, RCE, Resources/Funding, Schools, Website and *Higher Education*).
- There are now nearly 100 participants on our Group mailing list (support to the network is provided through Leicester University).
- Significant progress has been made on the RCE application, Sustainable Schools work etc.
- **So, what are we trying to achieve?**

## What are we trying to achieve?

*"Education for Sustainable Development is about the learning needed to maintain and improve our quality of life and the quality of life of generations to come.*

*It is about equipping individuals, communities, groups, businesses and government to live and act sustainably; as well as giving them an understanding of the environmental, social and economic issues involved. It is about preparing for the world in which we will live in the next century, and making sure that we are not found wanting."*

Source: UK Government's ESD Panel report to the Department for Education and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 1998.

# What can be achieved: Example One



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Monday November 27 2006



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**DfES launches Sustainable Schools consultation**

**Editor**

This government consultation will run until 1 September and be followed by a launch of variety of tools including a DfES sustainable schools website, a clear framework of action and means of self-evaluation

[\[Full Story\]](#)



**Launch of Yorkshire & Humber ESD Teacher Training Network**

**Welcome to Yorkshire and Humber ESD Forum website**

This website is designed to help people share news, activities, resources and ideas about Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Do get in touch with us. As Europe expands, and the world seems ever more an interconnected place the possibilities for improving education grow rapidly. This site emphasises some of the latest ESD thinking in Yorkshire & Humberside-and beyond. This online ESD forum is a gateway to a wealth of other websites which provide visions of a sustainable world orientated around the real issues facing the economies and peoples of the world – collective choices about energy, food and farming, poverty, water, biodiversity, new technologies and business models. This site forms part of a family of ESD websites across Europe, supported by the European Commission (see flags, top right).

**Calendar of Events**

Nov - Dec 2006						
				◀ Week 48 ▶		
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
26	27	28	29	30	01	02

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# What can be achieved: Example Two

## Regional Centres of Expertise on education for sustainable development

### RCE GREATER SENDAI

#### Geography

The City of Sendai is located in the Tohoku region in the north of Japan's largest island Honshu. Tohoku is mostly rural with a few larger cities like Sendai, the capital city of Miyagi Prefecture. Currently, the Greater Sendai Area covers the area within Miyagi Prefecture, but may include cities, towns and villages in neighbouring prefectures in the future. Municipalities actively involved in the RCE include the City of Kasennuma, Japan's first Slow Food<sup>1</sup> City which lies approximately 80km northeast of Sendai and is famous for its fishing port, and the Town of Tajiri, which lies approximately 50km north of Sendai and is known for abundant rice production.



#### RCE Greater Sendai's perceived role in the region

Along with the City of Sendai, which launched the Forum for Environmental Education and Learning in Sendai, City of Trees (nicknamed FEEL Sendai) in 2004, Miyagi University of Education (MUE) is taking the lead in developing RCE Greater Sendai. FEEL Sendai is an entity that coordinates partnerships between and among NGOs, schools, universities, public administration, businesses and others. As a major teachers' training institution, MUE is in a perfect position to link local boards of education and promote ESD in local schools. Building on the activities of the Environmental Education Centre (EEC), MUE is promoting ESD through education, research, and outreach. RCE Greater Sendai will serve to coordinate disjointed grassroots activities in the region into a concerted endeavour to achieve a sustainable society. It can also address the strong role that both rural and urban communities can play in ESD.



The bamboo from which streamers hang during the Tanabata are recycled first into lanterns and later into charcoal.

#### Regional challenges

RCE Greater Sendai is characterised by its internal diversity. It strives to practise ESD adapted to the distinctive characteristics of the metropolitan city of Sendai with its population of one million, the rural town of Tajiri, and the coastal city of Kesennuma. The RCE aims to start from environmental education (EE) aimed at a recycling-based society co-existing with nature and by expanding EE into ESD. Sustainability issues that the RCE will address include:

- Sustainable Production and Consumption – As the largest consuming region and the business centre in Tohoku, Sendai needs to promote sustainable production and consumption through green purchasing and other initiatives.
- Community Revitalisation – Problems of depopulation and economic decline caused by out-migration have been pronounced in small towns and villages in Tohoku. Rapid depopulation has led to problems in the provision of education and other social services in such places. In addition, the aging population and the twin pressures of trade liberalisation and deregulation are having devastating effects on the local primary industries.

<sup>1</sup> Slow Food movement was initiated in Italy in 1986 in response to the opening of a major fast food chain in the country.

## Regional Centres of Expertise on education for sustainable development

### RCE TORONTO

#### Geography

The city of Toronto, located on the northern shore of Lake Ontario, the easternmost of the Great Lakes, is the largest in Canada (and the fifth largest in North America) with a population of 2.5 million. The greater Toronto region is characterised by diverse peoples, economies, natural environments, as well as cultural, technological and educational resources.



#### Regional challenges

The Toronto region, known as the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is the fastest growing metropolitan area in Canada, and one of the fastest in all of North America, with a population of over 5.5 million. This region mixes a highly urbanised setting with mature suburbs and agricultural land undergoing transition. Provincial growth estimates suggest that the GTA will add more than three million people over the next thirty years. Sustainability issues that Torontonians are addressing include:

- The need for the wise management of regional growth – population growth in the area requires careful consideration of housing needs with available resources such as water, energy, green space, transportation and other infrastructure.
- Waste management – The City ran out of landfill space in December 2002 and since that time has been transporting waste across the Canada/United States border to private landfills in the state of Michigan. Waste management is an on-going issue for other jurisdictions in the GTA and the Golden Horseshoe.<sup>2</sup>
- Sustainable infrastructure – building and maintenance of the infrastructure for delivering on sustainability needs within different sectors.
- Safety – Toronto's crime rates are well below other major North American regions, although it is still vulnerable to violent acts, which creates challenges for all sectors of our society.
- Greening of the region – including fostering green economic development clusters and promotion and implementation of new greenbelt protection legislation.

#### RCE Toronto's perceived role in the region

Toronto is the primary population and economic centre within the Greater Golden Horseshoe region. It is home to a number of school districts, universities, colleges, research institutes, and non-formal educational groups, many of which are world-renowned for their work in the field of education and sustainable development. These assets, combined with newly emerging regional and provincial policies aimed at balancing interests among the natural environment, social development concerns and economic growth, make the Toronto region an excellent case study for how a cosmopolitan North American jurisdiction is facing issues in sustainable development.

View of Toronto skyline



<sup>2</sup> The Golden Horseshoe is a densely populated and industrialised region (approx. eight million) at the west end of Lake Ontario in southern Ontario, Canada.

## HE Participation in Regional ESD Activities

- HE institutions have played a major role in the development and operation of each of these initiatives.
- Major Potential roles include:
  - Dissemination of sustainability research beyond the ivory tower.
  - Training: From ‘bread and butter’ education of undergraduates in sustainability issues to programmes for industry/public sector/NGOs etc.
  - Engagement with policymakers including critical analysis of current policy directions/implementation.
  - Innovative multi-sectoral educational projects.
  - Universities are major regional players (employment, impacts on local economy), therefore we need to lead by example (ecological footprint, CSR).

## HE Participation in the East Midlands Network

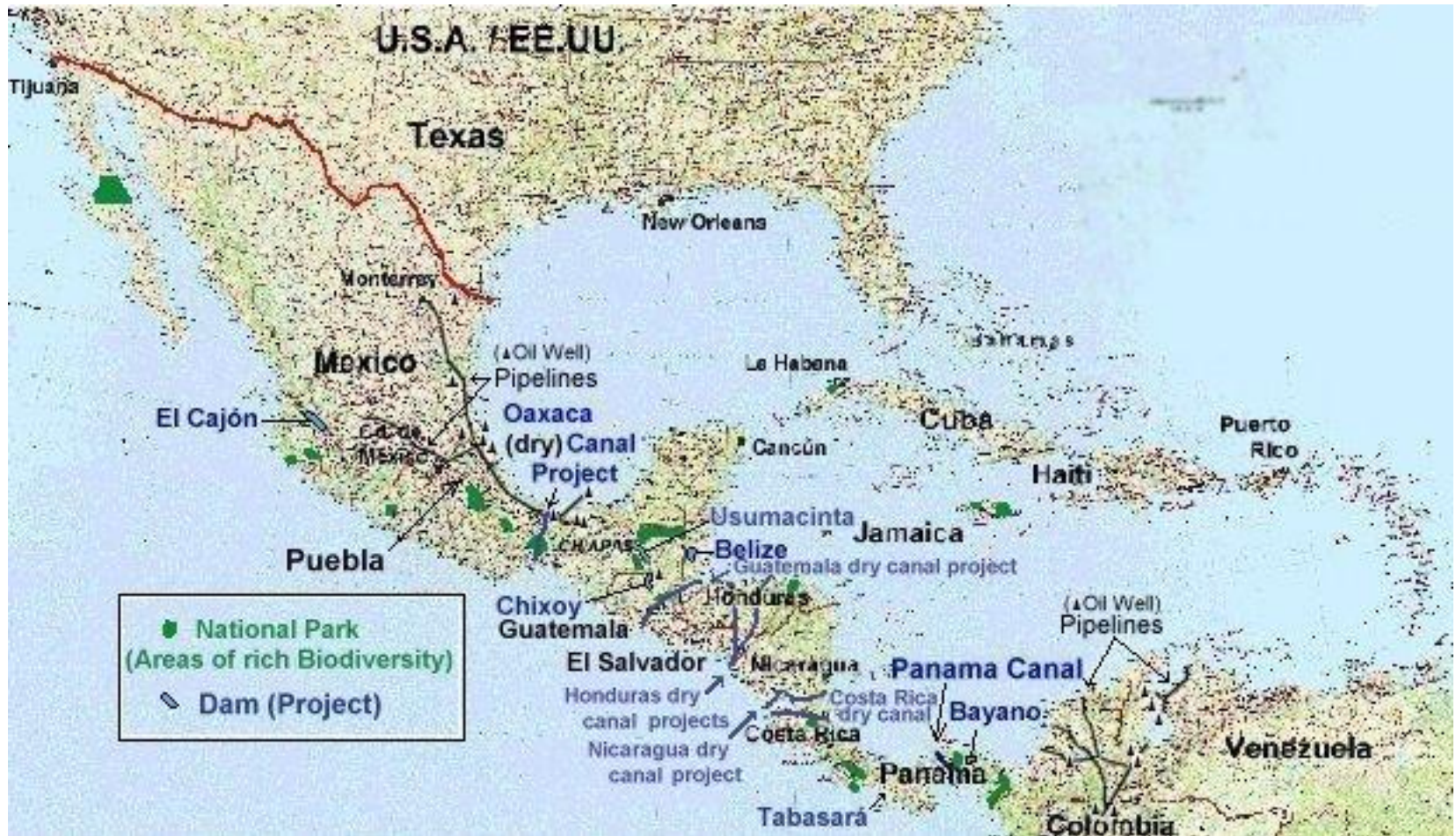
- Progress so Far?
- Formation of a Working Group (meetings thus far have involved Loughborough, Leicester, De Montfort, Nottingham, Northampton, Bishop Grosseteste).
- Involvement in the UN RCE bid which we will hear more about later.
- Currently working on a Regional bid under HEFCE's Leadership, Governance and Management fund (Broadening the Corporate Social Responsibility Agenda in Universities).

### **3. Sustainable Development: A Flag of Convenience?**

# Mesoamerican Biological Corridor



# Plan Puebla Panama



## **4. Broadening the Social Responsibility Agenda in Universities.**

## 4. Broadening the Social Responsibility Agenda in Universities

- *‘Putting our own shop in order.’* If HE institutions are to play a leadership role in promoting ESD then clearly this must affect the way in which HE institutions operate.
- *“CSR might provide a framework other than the usual top-down, shareholder oriented thinking. This thinking seems to form the fundamental paradigm of all too many management fads that are applied to universities without appropriate modification, seen as mere “manageable” enterprises.”* - Patrick Albrecht
- Started looking into this in relation to the HEFCE bid. But was shocked at the lack of attention being paid to CSR across the sector.
- Where CSR is mentioned it generally relates to relatively easily achievable and publicizable goals like measures to green campuses, charitable activity, flagship ‘sustainable’ buildings etc.

## 4. Broadening the Social Responsibility Agenda in Universities

- It doesn't mention:
  - criteria guiding the activities of companies that fund our research
  - management of university investments
  - the type of research that we engage in
  - our activities in overseas educational markets,
  - ethical standards of suppliers and contractors,
  - the ways in which we connect with the communities within which we are located etc.
- These are the kinds of issues which we will need to address if the HE sector is to play a real role in expanding Education for Sustainable Development in the East Midlands.