

# **Welcome to the Higher Education Academy's EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

## **New Quarterly e-Newsletter!**

Issue 1 (December 2007)

"The shape of the global future rests with the reflexivity of human consciousness – the capacity to think critically about why we think what we do – and then to think and act differently." -- Paul Raskin (2006), *World Lines – pathways, pivots and the global future*, Tellus Institute.

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#### **EDITORIAL**

Welcome to the first edition of the Project's quarterly e-newsletter. This will bring you news of the HE Academy ESD Project's work on a regular basis. Momentum seems to be gathering in ESD, but as we aware from almost daily news reports, sustainability issues require urgent responses globally and locally. Whilst HE is

waking to the challenge this represents, not least for our graduates, there is yet a long way to go, as is evidenced by the recently completed HEFCE review of sustainable development in HE (see below).

The emphasis in the HE Academy ESD Project in 2007-8 is on dissemination, and doing what we can to encourage further response amongst Subject Centres and in the sector generally. We see this Newsletter as one part of that process and hope you find it helpful.

*We wish to thank you for all the work you do in ESD and for your support of our work.*

*Have a lovely Winter Break...and best wishes for the New Year.*

*See you in 2008!*

The ESD Project Team

Simon Smith, Stephen Sterling and Heather Witham

HE Academy

## OVERVIEW

### WHERE'S IT GOING?

Things seem to be moving quite fast in the field of ESD in higher education. Notably, the 'Strategic Review of Sustainable Development in Higher Education in England', commissioned by HEFCE, is now completed, and will be published 'in early 2008'. The review aimed to measure a baseline of sustainable development activity which could be used to demonstrate progress over time and publicise what the sector is already doing. It also aimed to learn from institutions' experiences about the conditions for embedding sustainable development, including barriers and drivers, and to raise the profile of sustainable development in the sector. The ESD Project is represented on the Steering Group of the Review, and has been involved in discussions about the implications of the study. It is clear that HEFCE wants to make sustainable development a central part of its strategy for the future development of the sector, not least, perhaps, as the Review paints a mixed picture of progress. As part of this momentum, undoubtedly, HEFCE will be looking to the Academy and the Subject Centres to respond further to the ESD agenda. Meanwhile, HEFCE is currently consulting on its second Sustainable Development Action Plan which will be published in the spring. At the same time, HEFCE's general Strategic Plan 2006-11 (updated April 2007) [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2007/07\\_09/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2007/07_09/) contains a key performance target on sustainable development:

“By 2008, to develop a baseline assessment of how the HE sector contributes to the sustainable development of society, and to demonstrate progress in this area by 2011.”

Further information on HEFCE's approach is available at :  
<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lgm/sustain/>

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) commissioned its own baseline study in 2005, which has led to increased activity, too. Firstly, in June 2007, the Academy organised a Scotland ESD in HE Networking Day with the SFC and the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges (EAUC). Details, presentations and videos are available on our website under Past Events. Then in September, the SFC attended a Scottish Sustainable Development Policy Network meeting where the new Government's sustainable development (SD) priorities were discussed, along with how best to take forward the adoption of sustainable literacy in the curriculum. Universities Scotland's Learning and Teaching Committee (USLTC) had ESD on the agenda at their November meeting, and discussion included the Academy's past, current and future support activities to the sector. Our proposals for providing Scottish HEIs with at least one HEI networking day and one interdisciplinary seminar were welcomed (see below for details on these activities). There was also a feeling that given the importance of this topic politically and Scotland's commitment to the UN Decade of ESD, there was a need to put some resource into mapping all current ESD activity in Scotland. The Scottish Funding Council continues to work on all the objectives set out in Scotland's Learning for Our Future Action Plan and looks to the Academy as the key vehicle for delivering SD objectives in HE.

Similarly, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) recognises the need to build capacity within HEIs to allow them to respond effectively to new obligations in relation to Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) and to ensure that leaders and managers are appropriately trained. To this end, HEFCW is working with Academy Wales, the Academy ESD Project, and the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges in Wales to plan an ESDGC conference for the Welsh HE sector on 21 May 2008. Further details will be available in due course, but a preview is below.

Reflecting this activity, the Vice Chancellor's organisation UUK is publishing a report on sustainable development in HE in January 2008. Titled 'Greening Spires', the publication will feature 32 case studies from 29 higher education institutions.

## **REPORTS**

### **SUSTAINABILITY AND THE CURRICULUM: PROGRESS AND POTENTIAL**

Our July 2007 conference at University of Bradford ("Ecoversity"), judging by the feedback, was a *huge* success – attended by some 80 participants from across the country. The conference aimed to bring together experienced colleagues and those newly interested to explore how the curriculum is responding to the challenge and opportunities of sustainability and assess the prospects for future development.

From the outset, we tried to break the mould a little, promote interdisciplinarity and make for a more dynamic and interactive occasion than is normally the case at HE events. So we kept the keynotes short and down to two, then 24 parallel workshops kicked in, for the best part of the first and second days, led by enthusiastic presenters on a varied range of topics and approaches. Peter Hopkinson of our host Ecoversity devised a self-guided eco-trail of the Bradford campus, and on day two, we used 'open space technology' to facilitate a bit of self-organisation and the chance to address burning issues....Glenn Strachan, of the London South Bank University Education for Sustainability programme, acted as our 'roving reporter' across workshops and gave his impressions at the open plenary. All in all, an invigorating, informative and motivating occasion. Many thanks to Ecoversity, and to the UK Centre for Legal Education (an HE Academy Subject Centre) for brilliant conference organisation.

Here are some of the comments from the evaluation:

"Very much enjoyed the conference – thank you! Excellent opportunity to meet and discuss ideas with like-minded people and very encouraging to hear about everything that is going on in terms of ESD."

"This has been an absolutely invaluable project. It has given me personally more confidence, opportunities to think things through, new resources and perspectives. It has also provided a fantastic platform and opportunity for meeting, planning and consolidating and reflecting. The interdisciplinary groups and associated reports were really great."

"Excellent job – well done!"

Most of the presentations are now available to view at:

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/events/detail/educationfor\\_sustainabledev\\_UKCLE](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/events/detail/educationfor_sustainabledev_UKCLE)

and our Roving Reporter's Report on the event can be downloaded as a PDF here:

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/tla/sustainability/RovingReporterReport.pdf>

A number of papers based on workshops delivered at the July conference will appear in a Special Issue of the journal *Environmental Education Research*, which is being co-produced by the Project and the Centre for Research in Education and the Environment (CREE) at the University of Bath.

## UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH'S SUSTAINABILITY POLICY AND STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

Our senior adviser, Dr Stephen Sterling, who works at the Centre for Sustainable Futures, University of Plymouth, writes about the development of a university policy and strategic action plan:

"The Centre for Sustainable Futures (CSF) (an ESD CETL) is tasked with putting sustainability at the heart of the University of Plymouth's work. From the start, we have used an holistic model of 'the four Cs' to try to embrace all aspects of the university's operation: Curriculum, Campus, Community, and Culture.

"Two and a half years into the task, the main lever of change is the Sustainability Policy, and the associated Sustainability Action Plan. The development of these documents was led by the Centre starting last January, and involved a 'wide and deep' process of consultation across the university involving the Environment Committee, Heads of Schools and Divisions, key individuals, students, and Chancellery. Mechanisms included formal and informal meetings, the staff and student intranet, and feedback forms. Many of the Action Plan's seventy or so items arose from this process, which was described by a Deputy VC as an 'unprecedented example' of consultation. Indeed, we feel that the careful process undertaken is paying off in terms of staff and student commitment, although 'winning hearts and minds' is inevitably an on-going challenge. The Policy was approved by the Board of Governors in July, but we are now in the second round of consultation with Faculty Boards.

"We see the documents as 'living': that is, necessarily open to discussion, amendment and change if people are to feel a sense of ownership. At the same time, the existence of the documents helps ensure – if not guarantee – a degree of coherence and synergy between initiatives that would otherwise not exist.

"From the outset, it was always intended to share these documents and the process by which they were developed with the sector, not least through the Academy ESD Project, as we felt they might be of interest to other HEIs working to develop their own documents."

A summary, and the Sustainability Policy and Sustainability Action Plan can be viewed at:

<http://csf.plymouth.ac.uk> or

[http://www.eauc.org.uk/sustainability\\_policy\\_university\\_of\\_plymouth](http://www.eauc.org.uk/sustainability_policy_university_of_plymouth)

Stephen welcomes any feedback on them: [stephen.sterling@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:stephen.sterling@plymouth.ac.uk)

Stephen is also working on:

- a Generic Module in ESD. Progress to date includes an indicative set of concepts and learning outcomes, which is available now: please ask. This indicative set has been discussed with colleagues at Plymouth, and work now involves working with selected Schools to: a) simplify and adapt the language, b) see which concepts can be best infused in specific disciplines at Stage 1, and c) work up a more detailed outline for Stage 3 use in specific disciplines.
- a Learning and Teaching Framework in ESD.

Like the Policy, this work will be made available to the ESD Project networks.

### **WORK IN PROGRESS**

In addition to the dissemination of past work, we are also working on:

\* More interdisciplinary seminar series: During the 2006-2007 academic year, Dr Colin Brooks and Dr Alex Ryan facilitated a series of three meetings examining the challenges posed by the coincidence of two difficult topics – ESD and interdisciplinarity. A report on the series will be available soon (see below) and the outcomes warrant planning for additional seminars in other parts of the UK.

\* More solo HEI networking days: Again, based on successful events last year (see below), we are offering more of these days that encourage a 'whole institution' discussion of the past, current and future presence of ESD within the institution, and to encourage consideration of the various manifestations and understandings of ESD.

\* A networking day in Wales: Following on from networking days in the East Midlands, the South West, and Scotland, we are planning (in conjunction with the Higher Education Funding Council of Wales, see above) a networking opportunity for all those involved (or who would like to be involved) in ESD at degree level. The day is designed to enable exchange of activities, plans, ideas and case studies between those working on ESD within the area. The programme will consist of workshops, plenaries and a networking lunch. Date: 21 May 2008. More details to come.

## DISSEMINATION AND NETWORKING

### OUR WEBSITE

Here's a taste of what you'll find at <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/esd>:

#### Publications

Pushing the Boundaries (Sept 07)

Sustainable Development in Higher Education ("The Dawe Report" Nov 05)

#### Current and Past Projects

Details of each of the 15 Small Grant Projects

#### Subject Centre ESD Pages

Links to Academy Subject Centre web pages that contain ESD resources:

- \* Bioscience
- \* Built Environment
- \* Economics
- \* Education
- \* Engineering
- \* English
- \* Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences
- \* History, Classics and Archaeology
- \* Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- \* Information and Computer Sciences
- \* Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies
- \* Law
- \* Materials
- \* Philosophical and Religious Studies
- \* Psychology
- \* Sociology, Anthropology and Politics

#### News and Events

Both Academy and non-Academy news items and events that are relevant to those in the HE sector

Past event presentations and videos

#### Links

Relevant policy directives, international and UK-specific

Partners

## UPCOMING DISSEMINATION OF OUR WORK

In the two years plus that the ESD Project has been in existence, we've been busy, busy and it's time to let you know what we've been up to! Over the next few months, we will be publishing (on our website) case studies and briefings on our research, projects and events. Included will be:

- Action Research on Labour Market Evidence for Student and Employer Demand (carried out by StudentForce for Sustainability)
- Interdisciplinary ESD Seminar Discussion Series
- Regional/Country Networking Days: East Midlands, South West, and Scotland
- Research into UK Policy Contexts (carried out by Forum for the Future)
- Small Grant Projects
- Solo HEI Networking Days
- What Makes a Town Sustainable? Community Project

These will be presented in a standard format, and we hope they will prove useful to the sector. Feedback, of course, is very much welcomed. We will be particularly interested in feedback on such things as:

- how useful is this work to you? In what ways?
- has it led to any new ideas or developments in your work?
- is the format accessible and helpful?
- can you help disseminate this work further?
- what research or capacity-building work would you want the Project to be doing next?

## ESD NETWORKS

Do you have experience of, or are considering, incorporating ESD into your higher education work – or incorporating higher education into your ESD work? Statutory agencies, local authorities, voluntary and community organisations, and those working within higher education are all invited to join one of the networking lists we have created to allow individuals and organisations to find one another for collaboration on community and curriculum projects. Your details, including expertise and interests, are collected, collated and then sent back to other members for networking purposes. An e-mail list allows for periodical updates and extraordinary requests for partnerships. Links to the forms are below. All responses on the forms are made available to all other respondents in that region/country. You may choose whether or not to receive the e-mails with updates.

In Scotland? [http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/projects/esd/scotland\\_f.htm](http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/projects/esd/scotland_f.htm)

In the South West?

[http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/projects/esd/southwest\\_f.htm](http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/projects/esd/southwest_f.htm)

In Wales? [http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/projects/esd/wales\\_f.htm](http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/projects/esd/wales_f.htm)

Let us know if you find these network lists helpful as we may offer more in other regions... Watch this space!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Designs on the Planet: Studio Culture and the Challenge of Climate Change  
Oxford Brookes University  
Friday 25 January 2008

Skills for Sustainability - Putting the Pieces Together  
University of Exeter  
31 March - 2 April 2008

Rural Futures: Dreams, Dilemmas, Dangers  
University of Plymouth  
1-4 April 2008

An End to History? Climate Change, the Past and the Future  
Birmingham and Midland Institute, Birmingham  
3-4 April 2008

Global Leadership and the Global Fitness Framework Conference  
Anglia Ruskin University, Chelmsford, Essex  
3-4 April 2008

An Ecological Economics and Problem-Based Learning Workshop  
Birmingham  
Friday 25 April 2008

UK ITE Network for Education for Sustainable Development/Global Citizenship  
London  
Thursday 10 July 2008

All Our Futures: Education waking to threat, hope, and possibility  
University of Plymouth  
9-11 September 2008

For details, see <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/esd>

## AND TO TOP IT OFF...

The Project, represented by Stephen Sterling, is involved once again in judging some categories for the Green Gown Awards run by the EAUC. This year, there have been over 130 applications, more than twice as many as last year. For more information see: <http://www.heepi.org.uk/>

## **CONTACT AND FEEDBACK**

An invitation...

Let us know:

- if you find this e-Newsletter useful (or not!)
- if you have items for our next edition (Deadline: 1 March 2008, Publication: 15 March 2008)

If so, please contact the editor, Heather Witham at:

[sustainability@heacademy.ac.uk](mailto:sustainability@heacademy.ac.uk)

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/esd>