

## **Education for Sustainable Development in Wales**

*A nation with no sense of history is like a person without a memory. The marks of the farmers, the seafarers and the men of industry and commerce who forged the identity of Wales are everywhere in the landscape and buildings around us. For many, it is this cultural inheritance that gives a sense of place - "treftadaeth" or "belonging". As Wales recreates itself in the new millennium it is vital that we care for this fragile legacy as a cornerstone of our national identity, as an educational resource, as a spur of prosperity and as a means of communicating the essential character of Wales to its many visitors.*

In Wales there is a focus on not only Education for Sustainable Development but also on Global Citizenship (ESDGC). These two interrelated themes are a priority for the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and uniquely, Wales is one of the few world nations with sustainable development at the heart of government.

Set out in the Assembly's Sustainable Development Scheme, *A Sustainable Wales – Learning to Live Differently*<sup>1</sup>, and subsequently *Sustainable Development & Global Citizenship – A Strategy for Action*<sup>2</sup> (2006), the documents identify the 'pivotal' role of HEIs within ESDGC and acknowledges them to be "a major catalyst for learning about ESDGC". The documents also emphasise the importance of strategic leadership.

A Welsh ESDGC Network Group comprising the WAG ESDGC 'champion' (Claire Fowler), HEFCW (Dr Alyson Thomas), representatives from all twelve Welsh HEIs, and the Academy's Senior Advisor Wales (Gabriel Jezierski) has been meeting for some time. The group provides a central forum to discuss key issues cutting across from estates to curriculum design. Two key developments have been the planning of a major conference on ESDGC and also an audit of the curriculum. The group also links to the Academy's Education for Sustainable Development Project, which is led by Dr Simon Smith from the Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies.

The ESDGC conference entitled "Opportunities for Leadership in Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship: The Welsh Agenda", was held at the Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff on Wednesday 21 May 2008 and was attended by over 70 delegates from across Wales and the UK. The event, described as inspirational and stimulating, was addressed by Jane Hutt, Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills; Professor Merfyn Jones (Chair of Higher Education Wales (HEW)); and the Welsh arm of UUK. Professor Phil Gummatt, Chief Executive of HEFCW, referred to the important work of the Academy and the Subject Centres in developing the thinking around ESDGC in Wales in higher education. The morning, with presentations from Professor Geoff Layer, PVC Learning & Teaching, University of Bradford; Professor Daniella Tilbury, Director of Sustainability, University of Gloucestershire; and Chris Shiel, Head of Learning and Teaching, The Business School, Bournemouth University amongst others, was focused on the importance of leadership and taking a

strategic approach. The afternoon focused on four themes: *Student expectations of the green campus* (presented by People and Planet and the University of Glamorgan), *Building the Future: sustainable and social learning* (JISC Infonet), *Sustainability in the curriculum: a view from the Higher Education Academy Subject Centres* (Dr Stephen Sterling, Senior Advisor, and Heather Witham, Project Coordinator, Education for Sustainable Development Project) and *Research in a global context*. Presentations from the day are becoming available at:

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/events/detail/21\\_May\\_2008\\_ESDGC\\_Welshevent\\_Millenniumcentre](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/events/detail/21_May_2008_ESDGC_Welshevent_Millenniumcentre)

Such is the importance of ESDGC that the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) through its circular<sup>3</sup> has provided funding to take forward two of the key actions from the Action Plan: “The first step is to find out what is being taught in relation to ESDGC within higher education in Wales” and all Welsh HEIs have agreed to adopt a common approach to undertaking an ESDGC audit of the curriculum based on work undertaken by Professor Ken Peattie at Cardiff University. The Academy has been invited to review the audits. Secondly, “all HEIs are encouraged (via good practice examples) to develop a suitable environmental management system (EMS) and equivalent measures which cover all their operations in order to minimise their overall resource use to sustainable levels.”

The Academy has been asked to take over the chair of the ESDGC Wales Network Group and review the ESDGC audits to help inform future developments. Professor Howard Colley, Senior Associate at the Academy with a role supporting Wales, will be taking on the chairing.

Further information may be found at the ESD&GC website<sup>4</sup>:

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#### References and further information

1. <http://www.britarch.ac.uk/conserv/sustwales.html>
  2. <http://new.wales.gov.uk/docrepos/40382/4038232/403821/683829/esdgcG192-e.pdf?lang=en>
  3. [http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/BusinessCommunity\\_Docs/W0807HE\\_circ.pdf](http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/BusinessCommunity_Docs/W0807HE_circ.pdf)
  4. Academy website: <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/esd>
  5. <http://www.esd-wales.org.uk/>
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