

The GA: The big picture for the next five years

The Geographical Association is an influential organisation. It has around 6000 members from new undergraduates to retired teachers (11 people have been members since the 1930s!), and in places all over the world (currently 60 countries). The Association has been going for over 100 years and is currently staffed by 21 people based in Sheffield. There are many reasons why the GA flourishes: perhaps because we are all passionate about geography and its role in education; perhaps because so many people are prepared to give their time so generously; perhaps because it is still meeting the needs teachers of geography today. In order to maintain momentum, it is important that the GA continually thinks about its future and how to meet the needs of geography teachers, trainee teachers, initial teacher educators and the many others involved in geographical education, as well as how it provides public benefit.



From asking the question 'What kind of GA do we want and need over the next five years?', a strategic plan has evolved from a year of discussions with the Governing Body, the Presidents Group, the Education Committee and the Association at Work day at the Annual Conference. It tries to say what the GA may become over the next five years and how it will get there. It provides a statement of our vision, priorities and strategic direction. It is timely as we enter an 'age of austerity' in terms of public funding for education.

What is the Geographical Association aiming to do?

The GA's mission is '... to further geographical knowledge and understanding through education'. To serve this mission the strategic purposes of the GA are:

- to promote and support the learning and teaching of geography in schools and other settings
- to demonstrate the value of geographical understanding in education
- to serve the professional needs of all teachers of geography
- to increase awareness of the benefits of membership and participation to teachers in all sectors of education
- to secure a sustainable financial future.

At last year's conference *A different view: a manifesto from the Geographical Association* (2009) was launched. It embodies the GA's vision and mission, and captures the core principles that the GA 'stands for'.

A different view: a manifesto from the Geographical Association

The GA's seven core beliefs, set out in *A different view*, state that:

- Geography should be part of a balanced education of all young people. It is part of our 'conversation' about the Earth as the home of humankind.
- School geography, at its best, is 'living geography'.
- An essential educational outcome of living geography is to be able to 'think geographically' about the changing world.
- Geography is a subject in which young people can help shape the curriculum, working with their teachers and drawing from their own experiences and curiosity.
- Geography relies on perceptive and deep description of places, and seeks explanation about the changing world. Both are dependent on asking questions, an 'enquiry approach' is highly valued.
- Learning directly in the 'messy', changing, outside world is an essential component of a geography curriculum. We strongly support fieldwork as a mandatory part of geography teaching.
- Geography teachers should be encouraged to be the 'curriculum makers', not simply 'agents of curriculum delivery'.

To download *A different view* and its supporting images and activities visit www.geography.org.uk/adifferentview

How is the GA going to achieve these purposes?

In order to focus the GA's activities over the planning period (2009–14), everything it does will fall under these three headings: membership and community engagement; leadership; support and guidance. Detailed delivery plans are being written to set out how the GA is going to fulfil its aims for these three areas over the next five years, but this offers a summary...


1. Membership and community engagement

- *Membership*: The GA will stabilise the membership at 6000, in the first instance (2010). Over the planning period 'membership' will be re-evaluated, repositioned and radically expanded, with the introduction of a low cost personal membership.
- *Governance*: The Governing Body (GB), supported by the Presidents' Group will continue to oversee the GA effectively. The GB will maintain a healthy balance of academic geographers, geography educationists,

classroom teachers, headteachers (primary and secondary), local authority personnel and others who are active and knowledgeable in policy and/or education agencies.

- *Activists and Volunteers:* The Association's Education Committee (EC), Phase Committees and Working Groups will be diverse in terms of gender, age, practising teachers and minority ethnic groups. Groups and individuals will be active and influential and the EC will be the 'educational conscience' and 'think tank' of the Association.
- *Networks:* Members will have access to, and opportunities to participate in, a transparent web of networks, both face to face through Branches, Centre of Excellence Hubs, Primary Champions, and remotely through NINGs. The vision is for all GA members to be connected electronically. The GA's database will enable efficient management and knowledge of networks, and all participants will expect to hear from the GA on a monthly basis.

2. Leadership

- *Profile:* The GA will continue to contribute to high-profile academic and professional leadership in the field of geography education. This encompasses national lobbying, press involvement, writing articles, responding to consultations and bidding for appropriate contracts and consultancy work.
- 
- *RGS-IBG:* The complementary and distinctive relationship between the two organisations will continue to develop.
 - *Government:* Contact with government departments and the Opposition will be regular and frequent, with a government minister attending Annual Conference every two years.
 - *Other agencies:* There will be regular contact with key government agencies and statutory bodies (QCDA, TDA and their successors) and other key stakeholders (e.g. GTCE and other key players in education: SSAT, CfBT, Awarding Bodies, publishers).

- *Writing articles:* The GA will contribute articles about geography in schools in publications 'beyond' geography (for example TES, SecEd, Independent Schools Magazine, IQ Education).

3. Support and guidance

CPD, projects and events

These will remain a significant income stream of the GA. Supporting professional development will become a defining characteristic of the GA's work and the GA will become a niche market leader.

- *Accreditation:* The GA will develop a sought after CPD 'brand' which will successfully contribute to TLA, MTL accreditation frameworks, via face-to-face and online events and materials.
- *Events:* The GA Annual Conference and regional events will have c. 1500 paying delegates annually.
- *Consultancy:* There will be an active team of GA trained 'consultants' running network and regional events.
- *Funded projects:* The GA will manage a range of funded projects which contribute significantly to the GA's income profile. At any one time this will be characterised by a mix of government-funded work (DCSF or DFID), TDA and other external funders.



Publications and Journals

These will remain central to the GA's output and, as such, will contribute significantly to the income streams to the Association. Publications will evoke and exemplify the *manifesto principles* of the GA.

- *Sales:* Unit sales of publications will be maintained from Early Years to post-16 and ITE, developing marketing strategies with a view to increasing sales and expanding our market wherever practicable.
- *Website:* Publications and journals will interact increasingly with password protected areas of the website.
- *Communication boards:* The publications and journals boards will meet regularly and critically review design and contents every four–five years.
- *Subscriptions:* Journal subscription levels will be broadly maintained through the period, but with a significant increase in the number of subscriptions for two, or even three, journal titles.

Underpinning the strategy

The website is crucial to developing all of these areas. During the planning period, the website:

- will have substantially increased number of password protected areas for membership, journals, and publications, all of which will show a steady rise in the volume of traffic
- will become the key point of sales of membership, publications, journals and events
- will show an increase in revenue in its own right from advertising and sponsorship.

A **sustainable financial future** is essential to the GA's development. The GA will look to further diversify its income sources by adding a fourth main income stream (in addition to membership subscription, publication sales and CPD activities, including funded projects and event) from new sponsorship opportunities with a small number of strategically aligned corporate members or partners. The Association is aiming to maintain an annual turnover of around £1.4m at 2009 prices.

Anticipated sources of income

