

(Interim) Policy for Sustainable Development

Policy statement

The Geographical Association's position statement declares that "geography enables well-informed judgements about environments and supports an understanding of sustainable development". The Geographical Association recognises that sound and sustainable stewardship of the environment and its resources is essential for the well being of future generations.

The GA therefore is committed to:

- considering the environmental and social implications of all of its actions and decisions,
- acting in an environmentally and socially responsible manner
- adopting and applying principles of sustainable development
- encouraging action from its members and staff to improving the environment
- an overarching ethical policy to which this environmental policy contributes significantly (a copy of the GA's ethical policy can be downloaded from the following link: <http://www.geography.org.uk/aboutus/ourmission/>)

The GA has a significant influence in the education community. It will use this influence to work with individuals and groups for a geography curriculum that can deepen environmental understanding and provides a critical resource for understanding sustainable development.

In support of its environmental policy the GA will seek advice from others (e.g. CEE), and in particular will:

Operational activities

- Favour curriculum development projects that seek to refine and deepen the role of geography in education for sustainable development.
- Minimise the creation of waste; dispose of unavoidable waste in a manner which reduces its environmental impact, and reuse, repair and recycle materials where this is cost effective and to the benefit of the environment.
- Reduce the use of energy, water and materials; use recycled resources where possible.
- Adopt an environmentally sound transport strategy; reduce transport by car for travelling to work and for business purposes, where practical, and promote the use of public transport, cycling or walking.

- Consider social and environmental matters and environmental performance when purchasing products, choosing suppliers and service providers and making investment decisions.

Promotional activities

- Promote stewardship by supporting members and other contacts (customers, suppliers, project partners, employees etc) who are working towards sustainable development e.g. as part of the Sustainable Schools Agenda promoted by the Department of Children, Schools and Families.
- Raise awareness by making information about physical and human environments and sustainable development available to members and other contacts.
- Help members and other contacts use GA products and services in a socially responsible and environmentally sensitive way.
- Work to influence decision making on sustainability issues.

Members, and staff, of the GA will review the policy's implementation annually, assessing its environmental performance, setting targets and reporting progress in relation to the above objectives. Targets, with indicators will be included in the Association's development plan.

The GA will ensure that staff and members are aware of their social and environmental responsibilities relating to the policy.

This policy and its supporting rationale (see Appendix A) have been developed in collaboration with the GA's Education for Sustainable Development Working Group (ESDWG).

Approval at the 7th March 2009 meeting of the GA's Governing Body

Supporting rationale

“Sustainability is not a concept referring to some static paradise, but rather a capacity of human beings to continuously adapt to their non-human environments by means of social organisation.”¹

Such a view treats sustainable development as a process through which we can learn to live more in tune with the environment – that is within certain limits. Put another way: sustainable development requires a learning process through which we can (if we so choose) to build our capacity to live together more fairly and securely.

The study of geography makes a strong contribution to such learning:

The interconnected nature of geographical knowledge, the study of places and issues at local and global scales, and the value that geographers place on argument, exploration and investigation, enables learners to acquire the understanding, skills, values and attitudes needed to engage with the principles of sustainability in their current and future lives.

Thus, if sustainable development is viewed as ‘a process of improving the human condition which can be continued indefinitely without undermining itself’, an education for sustainable development through geography might expect teachers and learners to be capable of:

- understanding how to make specific contributions to future social and economic development in a sustainable manner
- knowing and participating in successfully managing the trades-off necessary in weighing social, economic and environmental goals
- evaluating their own and other’s actions in terms of sustainable development – and learning.

¹ Hamm B & Muttagi PK (1998) Sustainable development and the future of cities; London: Intermediate Technology Publications (p. 2)