

Policy for Sustainable Development (Interim)

The UK Sustainable Development Strategy Securing the Future set out five 'guiding principles' of sustainable development:

- living within the planet's environmental limits;
- ensuring a strong, healthy and just society;
- achieving a sustainable economy;
- promoting good governance; and
- using sound science responsibly.

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/policy/achieving-sustainable-development/>

The Geographical Association (GA) recognises that sound and sustainable stewardship of the environment 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 http://geography.org.uk/download/GA_AUethicalpolicy.pdf

We approach these issues ethically and transparently through our strategic development plan in order to use our resources efficiently and sustainably as follows:

- exploit the full potential of technology, including our membership business system
- make more effective use of our building
- deploy additional staff resource towards the promotion of membership benefits and revenue raising
- draw on and develop the contribution of volunteers and the wider community

Operational activities

The GA will:

- 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

The GA will:

- 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

Education Community

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 provide a critical resource that recognises the role that social, environmental and economic dimensions contribute to effective thinking and action regarding sustainable development.

The Governing Body and Education Group create phase committees, special interest groups and other groupings for specific purposes. The Sustainability and Citizenship Special Interest Group (SCSIG) furthers the aims of the GA with regard to the teaching of sustainability and citizenship education through geography. The GA and SCSIG will always seek pertinent and wide ranging advice and take note of current thinking in formulating strategy (see Appendix A). The Sustainability and Citizenship Special Interest Group (SCSIG) also undertakes to explore ideas for geography's contribution towards creating and adopting more sustainable lifestyles and active participation in communities.

<http://geography.org.uk/getinvolved/committeessigs/sustainabilityandcitizenshipsig>

Review

Members, and staff, of the GA will review the policy at regular intervals and undertake promotion to raise awareness of its importance. The GA will ensure that staff and members are aware of their social and environmental responsibilities relating to the policy.

Last updated: June 2015

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)