

The GA's 2014–19 Strategic Plan

Our Strategic Plan (2014–19) sets out what we want to achieve over the next five years and how we plan to achieve it. It helps us to set our direction, prioritise what we do and reflect on how well we are doing. The Plan was introduced in the autumn 2013 issue of *GA Magazine* (pp. 8–9) and since then further consultation with GA staff, Trustees, volunteers and members has resulted in the final plan presented here.

The Geographical Association exists to further geographical knowledge and understanding through education. Our work, since our foundation in 1893, is founded on our belief that geographical education enriches the lives of all young people and that a dynamic subject community is built on professional participation and innovation.

In the increasingly complex and faster-changing world of education, the GA will position itself as a source of trustworthy and authoritative advice and guidance on all matters relating to geography in education. We will provide support to teachers and advice to government and other organisations so that the benefits to learners of a quality geographical education are made clear.

Our **strategic aims** will guide our work and help achieve this vision. Each of the aims is necessarily broad, intended to have relevance over the entire planning period and provide a sense of strategic direction. Under each aim we have identified some **strategic priorities**. These will help us to focus our actions on an annual basis.

Vision for 2020

Providing a trusted voice for geography in education



Photo: John Lyon

GA Values

- Geographical education enriches the lives of all young people
- A dynamic subject community is built on participation and innovation
- An independent association demands stable finances.

GA Charitable Mission

To further geographical knowledge and understanding through education.

Strategic aim 1: Meet professional and educational needs

As the leading subject association for all teachers of geography, we need to engage and support geography education professionals at every stage of their careers. We will provide students with the quality materials they need for learning, and teachers with the practical help and advice they need for teaching, alongside the professional guidance needed to develop their expertise. To extend the range of GA support, we will also find ways to extend help to non-members, in ways that do not undermine the benefits of membership.



Photo: Bryan Ledgard

Priority 1a: Create innovative, high-quality and timely educational resources

The rapid pace of qualification and curriculum change and the increased emphasis on international competitiveness throughout the planning period will be accompanied by a weakening of authoritative sources of subject advice and support, including the anchor provided by a national curriculum. This places increased responsibility on the GA to develop professional and educational materials, based on quality geography, which promote the highest levels of achievement and personal development for all young people.

Priority 1b: Find new ways to promote professional development and develop leadership in geography

While CPD events and attendance have increased for the GA in recent years, there is potential to grow further and, at the same time, to innovate beyond the current models in order to reach more teachers. New technology and partnerships may help us to do this.

Priority 1c: Use our online and social media presence to engage, inform and connect

For a growing number of individuals and organisations, the GA website is the first point of contact with the Association, and this aspect of our work is expected to be relevant, responsive and accurate. Online communication is likely to increase throughout the planning period. The GA's social media presence is also a key indicator of its reach, a means of influencing ideas and debate and a rapid source of teacher and member feedback.

Priority 1d: Develop direct and inspirational support for young people

The GA already provides some 'direct' support for young people through partnerships with major publishers (through which resources suitable for student use are made available to teachers), Worldwise (student quizzes and competitions) and the activities of Branches. A careful strategy should be pursued over the next planning period to expand the range of services we offer directly to young people.

Strategic aim 2: Demonstrate the value of geographical education

Although the range of school settings is widening and competition for space within the curriculum remains intense, geography is a fundamental part of everyone's education. By drawing on the evidence of research and classroom practice, and by working constructively in partnership with others, we will ensure that teachers, school leaders, policy makers, the media and other relevant organisations appreciate the rich opportunities for learning offered by geography and its role in promoting personal and intellectual development for young people.

Priority 2a: Play a key leadership role in defining the purpose and value of geography in education

We are entering a period of greater complexity within the education system. Authoritative sources of subject advice and support have largely been replaced by a patchwork of formal and informal networks and the role of the national curriculum in prescribing most of the curriculum for most schools is also diminishing. The GA must therefore act as the voice of geography and of geography educational professionals, exert influence on policy making and national educational debate and provide thoughtful and trustworthy advice and guidance at every



level in order to ensure that every young person receives their entitlement to a quality geography education.

Priority 2b: Promote ideas and disseminate evidence on the distinctive contribution of geography in education

The GA plays a vital role in linking research and educational evidence to classroom practice and can therefore make an important contribution towards improving the evidence-base for geography education. There is an equal need to demonstrate how geographical education has a positive impact on school improvement and society and to establish the

credentials of the Association among governing bodies and senior leaders in schools, federations, local authorities and key players in civil society.

Priority 2c: Work in partnership to show how geography contributes to broader educational and societal aims

The Association enjoys a successful track record of partnership working and has built a reputation for professional project delivery. It has also established, over recent years, a number of strategic sponsorships and other forms of collaboration. We will build further on this so that the GA, through partnerships and strategic alliances with other organisations, enables geography to make a full contribution towards young peoples' education and towards society in general.

Priority 2d: Celebrate the achievements of young people, teachers, members and the Association

The commitment towards and enjoyment of geography education by young people and teachers deserves to be publically recognised and celebrated. Given the pressure on public finances and on the curriculum, the Association also needs to be active in publicising the contribution geography makes in education to policy makers and the wider public as well as demonstrating the valuable role of the GA.

Strategic aim 3: Use our resources efficiently and sustainably



In order to maintain its independence and support its charitable mission, the GA will stabilise its finances over the planning period. We will make effective use of key assets, such as staff and volunteers, and explore the potential of technology and our headquarters building. At the same time, we will seek to extend the range of financial support and prepare the Association for the future.

Priority 3a: Exploit the full potential of technology, including our membership business system

Technology can facilitate engagement with and membership of the Association. It permits virtual networking and has the potential to make the GA more efficient in its work. For both networking and marketing purposes the GA needs to position itself to be able to take advantage of latest technologies.

Priority 3b: Make more effective use of our building

The GA now owns its own HQ. However, we are not presently making full use of our current location. There is a need for the GA to address the question: what is the purpose of its HQ building? In addition to its present use,

we need to decide if there is a desire to use it for educational, geographical purposes and/or as a revenue-raising asset.

Priority 3c: Deploy additional staff resource towards the promotion of membership benefits and revenue raising

Our staff enable the Association to function. We will seek to develop their roles to ensure that membership benefits and other GA supplied goods and services are marketed as effectively as possible. We will ensure that resources are managed in order to achieve balanced finances.

Priority 3d: Draw on and develop the contribution of volunteers and the wider community

The GA relies on the subject expertise and support of its Trustees, Committees, Communications Boards and Special Interest Groups. It is vital that HQ staff and volunteers work in tandem to achieve the shared goals of the Association. In order to prepare for the future and ensure it represents the subject community, the Association also needs to widen participation by attracting and supporting new contributors.