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TOWARDS A STEP CHANGE IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION IN SCOTTISH SCHOOLS

A Report to WWF Scotland by Tim Birley

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report has been commissioned by WWF Scotland to identify statutory or policy instruments to bring about a step change in sustainable development education (SDE) in Scottish schools.

1.2 The assignment centred on interviews with 20 people from a range of agencies and experience that touch on SDE. Those consulted share the Sustainable Development Commission's (SDC) recent assessment that there has been positive progress, with pockets of excellence driven by committed teachers, but that sustainable development education is not yet widespread or mainstream.

1.3 SDE impinges on all aspects of education: how schools are built and run, how people get to school, how schools relate to the wider world, as well as core concerns about learning and teaching, and enabling children to fulfil their potential and be equipped for the future they face. To reflect this complexity, the step change sought has to address all these aspects, and therefore be multi-faceted.

1.4 Those consulted felt that a new statute – such as a “Schools (Sustainable Development) (Scotland) Act 2012” – would be inappropriate. What they identified is that securing a step change can build on foundations already in place and progress achieved, identifying gaps and linking together more effectively the multitude of activities and influences that bear on SDE.

1.5 Two of these foundations are pivotal. First, Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) is transforming Scottish school education. Its focus on developing the capacities of children explicitly embraces sustainable development and links this to citizenship in its widest sense. SDE and CfE have clear potential to be mutually supportive. Second, *Learning for Change*, the Scottish Government's second Action Plan for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, provides a recent and comprehensive policy framework.

1.6 With current resource constraints, the challenge is not easy. It requires a host of measures, leadership in schools, equipped teachers, and appropriate assessment and inspections. The goal is a step change to the benefit of all our children.

2. THE BRIEF

2.1 In the terms of reference for this research, WWF Scotland points out that Agenda 21, which highlighted the need for sustainable development education (SDE), was published by the UN at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. Nearly two decades later, there is nothing to indicate that the current approach to SDE, led by the passion of a few enthusiasts, will be adequate to ensure that our children will be equipped by all schools to participate in a sustainable society.

2.2 Following the National Debate on Education (2002-3) in Scotland, the subsequent development of the Curriculum for Excellence makes it clear that there must be a step change in education. The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 makes it clear that there must be a step change in our efforts to make our society sustainable. WWF Scotland argues that it is not clear how these two will be reconciled to ensure the step change in education also equips young people to contribute to the step change in sustainable development.

2.3 The purpose of this research is to identify statutory or policy instruments to bring about a step change in Scottish schools, ensuring all have the three components necessary for effective sustainable development education:

- teachers who are confident in their own knowledge of sustainability and the pedagogical approaches that effectively support sustainable development education;
- a senior management team that is supportive and equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to lead a sustainable school; and

- a whole school approach where sustainability is embedded in learning and teaching, the way the school estate is used and run and in the ethos of the school – a curriculum, campus, culture, community approach.

2.4 This report is the output of the research and sets out possible statutory or policy instruments aimed at ensuring all Scottish schools become sustainable schools. These instruments must be set within the context of the Curriculum for Excellence. A draft of the report was discussed with consultees at a seminar on 19 January 2011 in Edinburgh, and finalised taking into account all the views expressed.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 The primary source for this research has been a series of interviews and conversations with 20 people (listed at Annex 1). They ranged from policy makers to teachers involved in school and sustainable development education, teacher education and qualifications, and others concerned with sustainable development more generally.

3.2 In addition, references have been consulted (see Annex 2). The key sources were:

- the SDC's 4th annual assessment of sustainable development progress by the Scottish Government (December 2010);
- *Learning for Change*: the Scottish Government's Action Plan for the Second Half of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (May 2010), and especially the detailed Action Plan for schools; and
- the Curriculum for Excellence, including the original report of The Curriculum Review Group (November 2004).

3.3 To this material, the author brought experience of having had policy responsibility for environmental education in the former Scottish Office at the time of the Earth Summit in Rio and the publication of *Learning for Life*; and having worked since then as an independent adviser on mainstreaming sustainable development with public bodies in Scotland.

3.4 The consultation process started with briefing by the WWF Scotland education team, and conversations with two experienced leaders in sustainable development in Scotland. The range of people to interview was agreed and a framework of questions devised. This sought to cover what people saw as the key policy drivers for SDE in Scottish schools, where progress has been made and what the barriers may be. It also covered the three components identified by WWF as necessary for effective SDE: confident teachers; heads and senior staff with the capacity to lead sustainable schools; and adoption of a whole school approach. Finally, the framework sought to explore people's priorities for securing a step change, and the role of statutory or policy instruments within this.

3.5 In practice, the discussions sought to draw on the particular role, expertise and enthusiasms of those consulted. As a result, the interview framework was used as a flexible guide to try to ensure that, taken as a whole, the consultations covered the field. As discussions progressed, provisional ideas for findings and recommendations emerged. Subject to not pre-empting the views of those being consulted, some of these were explored and developed through the conversations.

3.6 The aim of this report has been to distil the views of this wide range of consultees into a coherent picture. This has been a task made difficult by the breadth of the field, but greatly helped by the remarkable consistency of views expressed and the helpful responses throughout.

4. SETTING THE SCENE

4.1 The goal of sustainable development is to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations. *Choosing Our Future*, Scotland's Sustainable Development Strategy, set out a clear view of sustainable development:

“We are committed to pursuing the goal of sustainable development in an integrated way, through a sustainable, innovative and productive **economy** that delivers high levels of employment, and a just **society** that promotes social inclusion, sustainable communities and personal well-being. This will be done in ways that protect and enhance the physical and natural **environment**, and use resources and energy as efficiently as possible.”

4.2 Sustainable development education applies this comprehensive approach, and in schools it aims to equip children for the world they will inherit and influence. As set out in the excellent *Valuing our Future Toolkit* (2008):

“Schools have a special role in preparing young people for the future. As places of learning, they can help pupils understand our impact on the planet and encourage them to weigh up the evidence themselves. As models of good practice, they can offer young people the chance to contribute to sustainable living, and demonstrate good practice to others. Empowering young people to take responsibility for their own future is not only desirable: it is a crucial feature of their education.”

5. THE POLICY CONTEXT

5.1 In trying to devise a means to bring about a step change, it is helpful to establish the current policy context. This is set out in five sections. The first covers the current reform of school education in Scotland, followed by the Scottish Government’s Action Plan for Education for Sustainable Development. This is complemented by a brief summary of the main commitments to sustainable development and climate change. The SDC’s review of progress in SDE provides an invaluable baseline assessment. Then experience of mainstreaming sustainable development in public policy is drawn on to provide a framework for the report’s recommendations.

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)

5.2 School education in Scotland is undergoing the most far reaching reform for a generation. Following the 'National Debate on Education' undertaken by the Scottish Executive in 2002-3, Ministers established a Curriculum Review Group. Their report *A Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE, 2004) identifies four capacities of education: to enable young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. This set in train a transformation process which is being led and implemented by Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS).

5.3 The character and content of CfE has been developed throughout the intervening period, and work is continuing. Key outputs have been the *Progress and Proposals* report (2006) and five sets of guidance in the *Building the Curriculum* series (2006-2010). *Progress and Proposals* specified that the curriculum will include learning through:

- the ethos and life of the school as a community;
- curriculum areas and subjects;
- interdisciplinary projects and studies; and
- opportunities for personal achievement.

5.4 A crucial component of CfE is the Experiences and Outcomes which describe the expectations for learning from the Early Years to the end of S3. The Qualifications Phase from S4 to S6 is still under development. To cite the Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) website:

“Taken together, experiences and outcomes across the curriculum areas sum up national aspirations for every young person: the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes we hope they will develop.”

The eight curriculum areas are: expressive arts, health and wellbeing, languages, mathematics, religious and moral education, sciences, social studies, and technologies. In addition, health and wellbeing, literacy and numeracy are to be developed across all areas of learning.

5.5 The documents identify a clear commitment to embed sustainable development, yet this can prove elusive to identify, depending on the starting point. If the search starts with mainstream CfE documents and reviews, references to SDE can be few and hard to find. For example, the *SPICe Briefing on CfE* (2010) has no reference to SDE, and *Building the Curriculum 3* makes just one reference (on page 23).

5.6 *Building the Curriculum 3* states that:

“important themes such as enterprise, citizenship, sustainable development, international education and creativity need to be developed in a range of contexts. Learning related to these themes is therefore built in to the Experiences and Outcomes across the curriculum areas. This approach reduces the need for other layers of planning across the curriculum.”

This ‘built in’ aspect is very important, together with the emphasis on inter-disciplinary projects and studies, which is natural ground for SDE. These become evident when the Experiences and Outcomes are explored: they relate to many aspects of sustainable development across the curriculum areas. In addition, it is noteworthy that it is intended that significant activities which are currently ‘extra-curricular’ (such as the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme) are now considered part of the curriculum.

5.7 The LTS website goes further, and states that:

“embedding sustainability themes within the curriculum, and in the life of the school, develops our children and young people as global citizens and equips them with essential skills, values and attributes for learning, life and work. Whole school approaches are vitally important if Scotland is to realise its ambitions towards a low carbon, zero waste future and deliver on the commitments outlined in *Learning for Change*.”

SDE and the UN Decade

5.8 The Rio Earth Summit in 1992 was the catalyst for the landmark Scottish environmental education report *Learning for Life* (1993). Ten years on, the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 agreed that 2005-2015 should be a UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. In response, Scottish Government has produced Action Plans for each five year period. The second Action Plan *Learning for Change* was published in May 2010. It outlines a comprehensive approach, and includes a section on SDE in schools. This highlights the significance of Curriculum for Excellence, as “a more coherent, flexible and enriched curriculum for 3 to 18 year olds, in which the principles of education for sustainable development and global citizenship are firmly embedded”. It advocates a whole school approach, and supports the “enormous success” of the Eco-Schools Scotland programme.

5.9 However, the text in the main document is less than a page, and contains few specific commitments. It is essential that reference is also made to the more detailed document on the schools sector. This is 17 pages with 15 action points. While some of the reported achievements in this detailed document are really statements of aspiration, the coverage is comprehensive. It covers the curriculum; support for staff, including teacher education, accreditation and inspection; support for pupils, through CfE and a whole school approach, Eco-Schools and outdoor learning; schools footprinting activities; school estates; greener school travel; and skills, including for the renewable energy sector. Action points are included in each section.

5.10 It also includes, at Action 1, the establishment by LTS of a Sustainable Development Education Advisory Group. The group, which has met three times since May 2010, is charged with providing strategic direction for delivery of the plan, and for developing SDE as a key context for learning within Curriculum for Excellence. This is within the scope of LTS’s work on

Developing Global Citizens which focuses on the themes of international education, sustainable development and education for citizenship.

Commitment to Sustainable Development

5.11 Notwithstanding the work of the Secretary of State's Advisory Group (1995-9) and the subsequent establishment of the SDC, it was only with the publication of *Choosing Our Future* by the Scottish Executive in December 2005, that government in Scotland had for the first time a coherent sustainable development strategy. *Choosing Our Future* included a chapter on Learning to Make Scotland Sustainable, and the commitment to "ensure that the new Curriculum for Excellence integrates education for sustainable development across all subject areas." This provided the context within which the first of the two UN Decade Action Plans was prepared.

5.12 The Scotland Performs framework of the current Government, which takes a different approach, has since superseded that strategy. It has the advantage of making 'greener' one of the five strategic objectives of Government and sustainability one of the high level targets. At the same time it lost the coherence of an overarching framework seeking to bring economic, social and environmental aspects into alignment. The tension inherent in "sustainable economic growth" between 'sustainable' and 'economic growth', has not been resolved; nor has the relationship to concepts such as sustainable communities and sustainable places been made clear.

5.13 There are a number of statutory duties and obligations on public bodies relating to sustainable development. One that raised hopes of significant progress was the inclusion in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003 of the requirement for all local authorities to contribute to sustainable development as part of the duty of Best Value. This duty was extended to the wider public sector in May 2006 through guidance to Accountable Officers approved by Scottish Ministers. There is little evidence that this duty has secured any transformation, or had an impact on education services or schools.

5.14 The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 ought to produce more change. This groundbreaking legislation was passed unanimously by members of the Scottish Parliament. It includes emissions targets seeking a reduction of 80% by 2050 from the 1990 baseline. Annual targets are also to be set, and from January 2011 there are climate change duties on all public sector bodies, including all local authorities and schools, to contribute to the delivery of the targets. A strategy for public engagement, also required by the Act, was published on 30 December 2010.

5.15 At this stage, it is not clear how the requirements of the Act will impact on schools and on SDE. However, the links are being made at a policy level. For example, the public sector duty guidance draws on Eco-Schools as a case study of good practice in integrating sustainability. The Public Engagement Strategy states that: "In schools, the Curriculum for Excellence offers the opportunity to ensure that Scotland's commitment to becoming a low carbon society is embedded in a positive way". The strategy includes:

"Action 4: in 2011, working with Scotland's local authorities, we will promote a whole school approach to sustainability and climate change – through the curriculum, through the way buildings and grounds are run and through the culture and ethos of the school. This will include increasing the proportion of schools with Green Flags, and with a renewed focus on climate change and greater use of the School's Global Footprint resource."

Progress in SDE

5.16 When advocating a step change, it is helpful to establish the starting point. Those consulted broadly agreed with the Sustainable Development Commission's (SDC) recent 4th annual assessment, sufficiently so that the section on education is annexed to this report (Annex 3). This is positive about the progress made in Scottish schools, especially the Eco-Schools

programme. It regards *Learning for Change* as “focused and credible”, but on schools it considers “there has been little evidence of any substantive progress since the publication of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) in 2008”. However, it recognises that the scale of change CfE requires of teachers means implementation will be gradual. The SDC “believes that CfE presents an excellent opportunity for making schools hubs of sustainable development learning and engagement with their communities”.

5.17 The clear consensus is that the present situation is that there are pockets of excellence, with some committed teachers, but that sustainable development education is not widespread or mainstream. The success of the Eco-Schools programme continues to be highlighted, “but it alone cannot deliver the whole SDE agenda for schools. For example, it is not designed to develop teachers’ pedagogical skills or build leadership capacity in the school’s management team”. We are not yet equipping children for the future they face, or preparing teachers to deliver SDE effectively.

Mainstreaming sustainable development in education

5.18 Discussion with those consulted showed that the components needed to secure a step change in SDE are fundamentally the same as those needed with sustainable development in other areas of public policy. These are to secure:

- leadership and commitment;
- reinforcement;
- embedding;
- participation and involvement;
- practical demonstration;
- resources; and
- measurement.

5.19 The first two of these are essential for progress to be made. There have to be clear leadership statements, from Ministers and Parliament tracked through to local authorities and headteachers that SDE is an essential activity. This has to be complemented by appropriate monitoring and audit (in schools, principally but not only, through inspections) to reinforce the message and ensure implementation. Together, the two of these can be powerful. Consultees referred to a pincer movement. If they are absent progress will not be made; if they are present, then change happens. Significantly, where progress in SDE has been assessed, for example by LTS (2005; 2007) or south of the border by Ofsted (2009), progress in SDE is seen to assist pupils’ overall performance. Ofsted refers to several instances of “more positive attitudes to learning in general, better behaviour and attendance, and to improved standards and achievement”.

5.20 However, experience has shown that leadership and monitoring alone are not sufficient. SDE also has to be embedded, irrespective of whether by statute, regulations or guidance, to become a normal and positive part of activities. This process has to be supported, equipping people to be able to deliver the culture change involved. The best way of securing that in an appropriate way at every level is to have people involved and participating in the process, so that they have shared ownership and find it empowering, not imposed or creating dependency. Experience has also shown the need for practical demonstration. There is enormous value in having, sharing and disseminating examples of good practice. This enables the process to ‘get real’ and people to learn what works and what doesn’t.

5.21 Two further components are needed. Any process of change needs resources. It is particularly vital in current circumstances to have skills in targeting and assembling available resources in the most effective way for implementation. To guide effective resource use, and for monitoring, there also has to be a system of measurement or assessment to be able to judge when progress is being made.

6. ENABLERS

6.1 There are several supportive features of this policy context which enable progress to be made. The main policy documents, *Learning for Change* and especially the more detailed explanation of the action points for schools (though the latter was familiar to disconcertingly few of those consulted), and building in sustainable development to the Curriculum for Excellence, all provide a potentially positive framework and comprehensive agenda. Also very supportive is that all those consulted in the policy community, acknowledging that these are the people with an interest in the topic, want to see and support progress. No-one suggested that this was not the time to explore and try to secure a step change.

6.2 It is also a specific strength that sustainable development education retains a holistic perspective on sustainable development, bringing together concern with economic welfare, social justice, equal opportunities, environmental stewardship, health and wellbeing, citizenship and a global perspective. It has not been disaggregated, as it has been in several fields of policy, where the emphasis has shifted to a narrower focus on climate change, the environment, or energy. As such, SDE fits both the long-term tradition of breadth in Scottish education and many of the aspirations of Curriculum for Excellence.

6.3 There is also a clear view that there are examples of excellent practice in Scottish schools, and individual committed and enthusiastic teachers. These examples can serve as models on which to draw and from which to learn, with the Scottish national education intranet, Glow, as a potential mechanism to enable dissemination.

6.4 Glow potentially provides one means for sharing experience and learning at every level from a massive library resource to a means for secure interactive learning and networking for pupils and teachers to use and share. 'Glow-meets' enable learners from across Scotland to take part in shared lessons. It can draw on the skills learned through Facebook and MSN, and harness standard IT facilities, to enrich the learning process. Even though not yet implemented in all local authorities, it could prove an impressive resource (though several of those consulted expressed reservations about this).

6.5 The agenda of SDE is also one which interests many learners, and to which many show commitment. For some, this is likely to be reinforced by media interest, especially in climate change. Increasingly too there is awareness of job opportunities in all aspects of energy efficiency and renewable energy. The *Learning for Change* Action Plan highlights this potential and its relevance to skills for learning, life and work. The commitment to a low carbon economy is enshrined in legislation and a priority across the political spectrum. The opportunity this is creating for careers is a key driver of SDE.

6.6 One further key enabler is the capacity for schools to be able to draw on external resources. There is a plethora of specialist contributors from the NGOs, voluntary sector, government agencies and NDPBs, and special purpose bodies and networks (such as Eco-Schools Scotland and the International Development Association of Scotland (IDEAS)). There is also much relevant experience from across the UK, such as resources from WWF (including on whole school approaches) and Sustainability and Environmental Education (SEEd). Without these, such progress as has been made would have been much more limited, and they represent a vital continuing resource for schools. The importance of this resource is likely to grow as budget constraints further impact on local authorities.

7. BARRIERS

7.1 The consultations also revealed a number of barriers with which change, let alone a step change, has to contend. Some of these relate to education in Scottish schools generally, others specifically to sustainable development education. Before describing these, however, a note of caution is needed about resource constraints. Notwithstanding the positive stance of many consultees, this research has been conducted against a background of public expenditure cuts, already impacting on local authorities. This is not a time for additional burdens. Whatever this

report recommends has got to be about doing things better, and potentially the difficult task of doing better on less.

Barriers in school education

7.2 The Curriculum for Excellence is a central part of the policy context, but its implementation has proved problematic. The impression is that the development work lost its way for a period from the vision of the original Review Group. While some clarity is seen as having been restored by the current Education Secretary and senior civil servants, there are still perceptions that it is too vague and bureaucratic. There has been a concern that teachers will not know what is expected of them in the classroom, especially at secondary level. While recent and current work on Experiences and Outcomes, and by SQA on qualifications, should improve the situation, there is still some hesitancy in the teaching profession.

7.3 At the same time, teachers feel themselves already under pressure. In turn this exacerbates what is seen as a lack of sharing and communication between teachers. It is said that teachers don't talk to one another, inhibiting the potential for inter-disciplinary working and sharing best practice. As one consultee put it: "don't expect a teacher to be able to go to an inspiring one-day CPD event and come back to implement it and inspire colleagues. The reality is they will spend the next day catching up what their stand-in colleague did not manage to complete when they were away".

7.4 If there is frustration in classrooms, there are risks too at the institutional level. There is a view that there has been a decade of peace in Scottish education since the McCrone Agreement, with Scottish Government, local authorities, teachers and their unions all working together. It is feared there are signs that financial retrenchment may put this at risk. Effective education provision relies on partnership, and a retreat to strife between key players would make a difficult situation worse.

Barriers for Sustainable Development Education

7.5 Taking forward sustainable development education encounters two dominant barriers. First, the signal given by Ministers appears to have been insufficient in terms of its impact (and that by local authorities seems all but absent). Few in schools know of the existence of *Learning for Change*, let alone the detailed Action Plan for schools. Quite simply SDE is not seen – and crucially not seen by headteachers whose role is pivotal – as a pressing or 'must do' aspect of work in schools. As such it is largely left to the enthusiasts and external bodies, and is not seen as a requirement on every school.

7.6 Second, there is a lack of reinforcement through monitoring. Notwithstanding the high and increasing level of Eco-Schools participation, this is optional. It used to be one of the performance measures for one of the former national priorities in education, National Priority 4, Values and Citizenship. HMIe inspections may touch on SDE, but this is not either a mandatory or even a standard part of the reporting requirements. There is no evidence that local authorities require improvement in SDE as part of school improvement plans. Nor are there signs that the local authority requirement to contribute to sustainable development as part of the duty of Best Value imposed by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003, which ought to be a supporting factor, has reached education departments. This is a disturbing portent for the duties on public bodies under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

7.7 Remedies to these two critical barriers in turn risk SDE being seen as an additional topic to cover: an extra or bolt-on. Those consulted are concerned that if the remedy to these barriers is a mechanistic requirement with no sense of shared ownership, then the outcome could too easily become a 'tick box' exercise, of the kind some consider has occurred with health promotion. To secure a step change requires that SDE is integral across the culture and curriculum in all schools as part of everyday activity.

7.8 At present, many teachers are not equipped to be able to do this. SDE forms a limited part of their education, whether in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) or Continuing Professional

Development (CPD). For work in class, there is a lack of material of the right kind. Related to the barrier of not being a 'bolt-on', those consulted consistently stressed that what is needed is not specific project packs, but tools to show how SDE can support both teaching in the traditional disciplines, and inter-disciplinary activities. While there may be potential for learning from the experience of others, reservations were expressed that Glow is not adopted everywhere, is not always responsive (one consultee said accessibility compares unfavourably to MSN and Facebook), and cannot replace face to face contact.

7.9 There is now also a lack of support for schools with the widespread demise of SDE co-ordination posts in local authorities across the country as a result of cuts. There has been a valiant but piecemeal response to covering the resulting gaps. This includes the consideration of mentoring through the Eco-Schools programme; co-ordination through the Developing Global Citizens team at LTS; and bringing together local authority resources relating not only to quality improvement in education, but also to sectors such as energy, transport and waste. Nevertheless, the loss of dedicated SDE resources in local authorities is a backward step and a barrier to progress. There are reports too that outdoor learning, a key aspect of experiential learning, is an early casualty of the cuts.

7.10 There is also a lack of a whole school perspective (though the detailed version of *Learning to Change* and the perspective on the LTS website are important and noteworthy exceptions). Few of those consulted mentioned school buildings until prompted, and no-one mentioned school transport. There was little discussion of the relationship to the community in which schools sit. They were of course well aware that while core curriculum issues are central, the context in which education is delivered also matters.

7.11 Raising pupils' awareness of the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and the benefits of healthy travel choices, makes no sense if classrooms are overheated and transport is car dominated. It will also be undermined if these values are not evident at home. Energy use in school buildings and transport is also important as a significant proportion of local authority carbon emissions and fuel bills. Resolving these issues is made more difficult by institutional barriers, particularly with Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and Public Private Partnership (PPP), where the school may have little or no control over heating and transport, and not be able to benefit from any savings made. These and other institutional barriers are also liable to frustrate the ideal of being able to use schools as a community resource, making more effective use of resources and breaking down barriers between school and home.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 The brief for this research asked for the identification of statutory or policy instruments to bring about a step-change in SDE in Scottish schools. On the statutory aspects, none of those consulted saw a requirement for a new statute. When the prospect of a Schools (Sustainable Development) (Scotland) Act 2012 was suggested, several reasons were advanced why this would not be a sound way to embed sustainable development education.

8.2 First, in the current expenditure climate and with implementation of CfE underway, this was not seen as the right time for new legislative duties. Second, it was not thought that making separate provision for SDE would send the right signal: it would too easily give the impression that SDE is an extra or bolt-on, not something which (irrespective of the extent of progress) is already a built-in requirement. Finally, it was argued that to specify educational duties through statute runs counter to the grain of Scottish education where, unlike England, statutory definition of purposes and duties has long been applied with a light touch. Only if this position changed, and other aspects of the curriculum were being enshrined in law, should SDE then take its place alongside these.

Recommendation 1:

New legislation to impose duties on Scottish schools to deliver sustainable development education is not appropriate at this time.

8.3 Given the strong basis in current policy and support from the policy community, the overwhelming view is that the right way forward is to develop a multi-faceted approach addressing all the aspects raised in this report. The presentation of these draws on the framework proposed at the end of Section 5.

Leadership and commitment

8.4 Clear leadership and commitment are vital to drive policy forward. There is strong support (amongst those aware of it) for the sound policy framework for SDE in Scottish schools set out in the detailed Action Plan which forms part of *Learning for Change*. However, this Action Plan does not have a high profile in the schools sector (the consultations suggested far less than in Higher or Further Education).

8.5 Notwithstanding the original launch by the Minister, Ministers need to take every opportunity to draw attention to the schools part of *Learning for Change* and its Action Plan with clear signals that it is here to stay. It is particularly important to get the message across to Directors of Education and headteachers that Ministers, LTS and HMIe regard SDE as an integral part of CfE, an important means of delivering the new curriculum and the approach it enshrines, and vital for all our children and their future. Leadership events on CfE provide an opportunity to do this, as well as events relating to greening education. The message, for example, should be central at the Scottish Government's UN Decade for ESD conference planned for March 2011 which will focus on leadership in sustainable development education and the 2011 Scottish Learning Festival.

Recommendation 2:

2a. Ministers should make clear to schools that Learning for Change, and its detailed Action Plan for schools, remains the basis for SDE as an integral part of CfE. This message should be reinforced by LTS and HMIe, and conveyed to Directors of Education and headteachers.

2b. In support of this, a full Communications Strategy for the Action Plan should be developed and implemented by the Scottish Government, identifying audiences, strategies and targets. This should be followed by annual progress reports on the action points, and updated as new requirements related to SDE arise.

Reinforcement

8.6 With competing pressures on priorities, it is essential that commitment to SDE is backed up by formal requirements to report on progress as part of normal school inspection procedures. Since the Curriculum for Excellence will embed SDE, including a whole school approach, school inspections must embed this explicitly as part of the assessment process. There is already a commitment in *Learning for Change* (at Action 8) that HMIe will support the development of SDE through self evaluation and the school inspection process. However, HMIe's own report on *Sustainability and Scotland's Colleges* sets out firmer recommendations including the need to "develop and implement systematic approaches for embedding sustainable development". There is a need to strike the right balance between helping schools be able to guide themselves, while also having an adequate and independent check on performance.

8.7 To avoid duplication and ensure a consistent approach, consideration should also be given to how best to share information between the various inspection and improvement services for each school. This should cover HMIe and LTS school visits and inspections, local authority activity on quality improvement, school improvement plans, and Eco-Schools assessments (including the Green Flag review process). It would be likely to also help schools if an integrated approach can be taken to the obligations they may face relating to the duty of Best Value, and to the commitments embodied in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act.

Recommendation 3:

3a. HMIe should ensure that school inspections include assessment of progress in implementing a whole school approach to SDE, as an integral part of CfE. This should also form an integral part of school Development or Improvement Plans.

3b. Mechanisms should be sought by HMIe to ensure that school inspections, improvement activity and Eco-schools assessments should inform one another. Account should also be taken of Best Value and climate change commitments, including the contribution to targets and other requirements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

Embedding

8.8 The embedding of SDE within CfE has been noted throughout this report. This needs to be locked in and strengthened. The merger of LTS and HMIe from 1 July 2011 into the new Scottish Education Quality and Improvement Agency (SEQIA) provides an opportunity to reinforce this commitment and make progress on SDE, and this should be included within the new agency's remit. In turn, this means that the new agency must retain its capacity in Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship to secure continuing development and integration of SDE within CfE. This activity is complemented by SQA's work on developing new national qualifications, which is well underway, and SQA already has guidance on embedding sustainable development and enterprise in all qualifications. It is vital that representatives of the Sustainable Development Education community are either involved in SQA's Qualification Design Teams or able to comment on proposals, in order to support the embedding of SDE across all aspects of the curriculum. It is recognised that this would have to be agreed by SQA at management level.

Recommendation 4:

4a. The Scottish Government should ensure that the remit of the new Scottish Education Quality and Improvement Agency includes reference to embedding sustainable development education and global citizenship in all Scottish schools. The new agency must retain its capacity in Developing Global Citizens to support teachers and schools in taking this work forward.

4b. SQA should ensure that there is a mechanism to ensure SDE input to all new qualifications.

8.9 If embedding SDE within the curriculum and qualifications is vital so too is ensuring that teachers can deliver SDE effectively. The quality and competence of teachers is fundamental to school education. The Donaldson Review of Teacher Education in Scotland, published after the interviews for this report had been conducted, addresses both initial teacher education (ITE) and continuing professional development (CPD). It does not address SDE or signal the need for a whole school approach. The review is primarily about structural changes and says little about subject matter other than literacy and numeracy. However, at the January seminar it was suggested that the publication of the Donaldson Review and the proposal for the SEQIA provides a better opportunity to secure action on the recommendations on SDE than has been the case thus far. Donaldson's report is titled *Teaching Scotland's Future* and early chapters consider the qualities and skills for 21st century teachers and leadership, and highlights changing ICT needs. Another overriding characteristic of the 21st century will be the transition to a low carbon economy, and reference to this and the need for SDE should be included in the Government's response to Donaldson.

8.10 *Learning for Change* highlights the importance of both ITE and CPD for SDE. The Action Plan (Actions 6 and 7) acknowledges and supports the important role of the ITE work by IDEAS, and of the General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS) in accreditation for teachers

involved in SDE. CPD Scotland is also a vital network providing access to CPD resources. It remains important that these initiatives are further developed and that their profile is raised so that qualifications in SDE are valued. Some teachers will appreciate it if this is seen as a clear component of a promotion path.

Recommendation 5:

5a. Scottish Government should ensure that any response to the Donaldson Review includes reference to the importance of SDE as part of both initial teacher education and continuing professional development for 21st century teachers and leaders.

5b. As part of its response to the Donaldson Review, Scottish Government should ensure that SDE is an integral component of the ITE and CPD programmes for all pre-service and practising teachers, and should bring together and support government agencies, local authorities, universities and colleges and the voluntary sector to ensure delivery.

Participation and involvement

8.11 Often the most neglected feature of trying to secure a step change in policy, participation and involvement is ultimately the key to whether or not change takes root. There is a need to engage better with how to get the message out to all those that have the potential to be involved. For SDE this means involving children; teachers and headteachers; local authorities including staff beyond education departments; and the wider school community (and communities of interest including HE/FE and those involved in Community Learning and Development). Eco-Schools Scotland has done sterling work in securing the participation of children and deserves continuing and long term support. A particularly valuable initiative, in the face of the reduced numbers of local authority SDE co-ordinators, has been the efforts by LTS, Schools Leaders Scotland and Eco-Schools to encourage schools to share and develop good practice. Opportunities have been initiated for teachers and headteachers to meet, and visit schools to share and discuss experiences.

8.12 One striking aspect of the consultations was how well people involved in SDE in Scotland know one another. This is undoubtedly an asset, but in the past was associated with a gulf between SDE and others who saw themselves as being in the education mainstream. It is important that the SDE community is also outward facing and well connected throughout education. One avenue to develop this would be to strengthen links to other relevant networks, including the Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN, based at Keep Scotland Beautiful) and CPD Scotland (based at COSLA). There is a case to developing a networking capability analogous to the successful model developed by SSN.

Recommendation 6:

6a. LTS (and its successor Agency SEQIA), working with stakeholders including the Sustainable Development Education Network and IDEAS, should prepare and implement an Engagement Strategy to secure the participation and involvement of all those able to contribute to SDE in schools.

6b. The Engagement Strategy should include drawing on the expertise of other relevant networks, including SSN and CPD Scotland, and exploring in partnership with them the potential for developing a networking capability and where this should be located.

Practical demonstration

8.13 Many of the policy recommendations relate to aspects of the educational process. Progress can be much enhanced by experience of relevant practice. It is important to identify

good (and best) practice, and then ensure its effective dissemination. The aim is to share, learn from, and then replicate what works. There is also scope to learn from what doesn't, but learning from mistakes in public policy is often difficult because the culture is risk averse.

8.14 Those consulted were positive that there are examples of Scottish schools where a whole school approach to sustainable development is being pioneered, and examples of inspired teaching, though resources that document this in Scotland appear limited. The *Sustainable Secondary School Project* (LTS 2005) is a notable exception. It would be valuable to capture more of this experience. Although reservations were expressed about its reliability and accessibility, in terms of IT Glow is an obvious resource with the potential to be able to do this and to share good practice with others. There will also be an important role for face-to-face discussions, for mentoring and for site visits; for many teachers these may be the most valuable interactions.

8.15 Alongside and drawing on good practice case studies, it would also be invaluable to articulate a clearer vision of what SDE is about, and what a whole school approach looks like. This could be an important step towards securing more participation and involvement. There is an important opportunity to develop a toolkit as practical guidance, which should also illustrate SDE as a means of delivering CfE. The example of *Valuing our Future – a toolkit for developing sustainable schools*, produced by the National College for School Leadership in 2008 is outstanding. The toolkit covers a whole school approach, including the global dimension, local well-being, inclusion and participation, purchasing and waste, travel and traffic, energy and water, food and drink. There would be great value in producing a Scottish version, showing how SDE relates to the eight curriculum areas of CfE and to the three areas for which all teachers have responsibility: numeracy, literacy and health & well-being.

Recommendation 7:

7a. LTS and its successor SEQIA should ensure that all means of good practice exchange are developed, including within Glow, as tools for learning and teaching; there is a particular role for face to face interaction.

7b. Complementing these, and drawing on the case studies, a Scottish toolkit for developing sustainable schools should be produced by LTS. This should show what a whole school approach to SDE can look like, and how this relates to and can help deliver all aspects of the curriculum.

8.16 There is also a strong case for more practical action on the specific topics of energy and transport, and taking the opportunity to link these to the curriculum. There has been isolated good practice, but it has not been commonplace. The need for action on climate change should now give an impetus. School buildings have to move towards becoming carbon neutral, and schools which are overheated (or too cold) become things of the past. Similarly, there has to be a reversal of the dominance of the car in the journey to school especially in towns and cities. Institutional barriers to progress on these topics must be overcome, and there is a case for enabling schools to have more control over these aspects. In particular, there is a need to draw on the experience of those situations where it has been possible for energy savings to accrue, at least in part, to schools, for re-investment in further emissions reducing measures. In moving toward more sustainable transport, there is a case for further examination of the North American approach to school buses, and not only in remote or rural areas.

Recommendation 8:

8a. Local authorities should work with schools, teachers and pupils to reduce schools' emissions and footprint, particularly in energy use and transport in order to meet schools' obligations under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, and as part of a whole school approach to SDE.

8b. Consideration needs to be given by local authorities on how to enable schools to benefit from energy savings which they identify and deliver.

Resources

8.17 As noted several times in this report, the current financial situation means the focus has to be on the better use of existing resources. It is in school that the vast majority of SDE work will take place, and the school voice must be heard and listened to. There are many keen and committed staff in our schools who have a great deal to offer in terms of experience, enthusiasm and ideas. That remains the key resource to tap into.

8.18 Also within schools, the Curriculum for Excellence reflects an appreciation that children's most profound learning experiences can come from extra-curricular activities. Two extensions need to be made. First is the appreciation that many activities, such as Young Enterprise, the Duke of Edinburgh awards, outdoor education, Model United Nations, international exchanges of all kinds, as well as Eco-Schools, can all contribute to SDE. Second, that these 'extra-curricular' activities come to be seen as being within the curriculum.

8.19 In a similar way, this research has emphasised the extent of the external resources, including from the voluntary sector and wider community that are available to assist and support schools and teachers. It seems likely that there is scope to secure more effective deployment of these resources, while acknowledging that this will require some additional administrative effort. It is important for schools to be aware of the resources available to them, but also to be able to draw on them in ways that support the curriculum rather than externalise the activities. This may require those providing external resources to be adaptable and willing to fit in with the needs of the teachers and pupils in the school, starting from where they are, rather than delivering a pre-determined package. All good teachers start where the learner is and take them forward from there.

8.20 At local authority level, consideration will probably already have been given to the potential and resource implications of using school buildings and grounds as broader based community facilities. Some new schools are being built as a community campus. A wider consideration, relevant to a whole school approach and not always taken into account, is to ensure that plans for the school estate, including new build, extensions, renovation and closures, are co-ordinated with development plans (and housing and population projections) and infrastructure provision.

Recommendation 9:

9a. To maximise the effective use of available resources, schools should be encouraged by LTS to absorb extra-curricular activities into the curriculum.

9b. LTS (and its successor SEQIA) should work in partnership with external agencies to ensure wherever possible that its work with schools directly contributes to the curriculum's Experiences and Outcomes, and to qualifications.

9c. Local authorities should take steps to maximise the use of the school estate for encouraging sustainable communities, recognising the need to make best use of available resources.

Measurement

8.21 The current emphasis of policy, reflected in Scotland Performs, is to streamline the system of indicators and reduce the number of targets. Some of those consulted suggested that the record of participation and success in the Eco-Schools programme should continue as a simple yardstick of progress, noting its former inclusion under National Priority 4 Values and Citizenship. This could be as a Single Outcome Agreement indicator.

8.22 The loss of the SDC this year also removes a key source of independent assessment. Interestingly, the detailed Action Plan for schools in *Learning for Change* took the SDC's 3rd Annual Assessment as the benchmark for "what we have achieved". A good starting point for measurement would be to have an annual progress report on the action points in *Learning for Change*. Some aspects will be difficult to measure, particularly changes in values and attitudes, but others easier. It would also be valuable to develop the monitoring process, so that, for example, progress on Action 14, which seeks to encourage the implementation of sustainable school travel plans, should be supported by statistics of car use for the school run. Similarly, local authorities should hold data on energy use in schools, which they will need for their own progress on the climate change duty.

8.23 School pupils are beginning to effectively measure the outcomes of their activities using educational tools such as Schools Global Footprint and the Eco-Schools Review. As this work advances there will be an opportunity for LTS (and its successor SEQIA) to make use of these measurements to assess the overall outcomes across Scotland.

Recommendation 10:

10a. The Scottish Government should publish an annual progress report on the Learning for Change Action Plan for Scottish schools. Wherever possible, assessments of progress should be supported by evidence.

10b. Progress on Learning for Change Action 9, support for Eco-Schools Scotland, should show participation rates and progress being achieved through the stages to Green Flag awards. This should be considered for inclusion in the Menu of Local Outcome Indicators for local authorities.

10c. Mechanisms should be sought by LTS (and its successor SEQIA) to collect information on the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of Footprinting and Eco-Schools activities across Scotland.

9. CONCLUSIONS

Progress made on the journey

9.1 To mainstream and embed sustainable development education is a journey. Scotland was in the lead with this agenda at the time of *Learning for Life*, but then allowed others to overtake us. Scotland now has the opportunity to regain its position with the key building blocks of CfE and the *Learning for Change* Action Plan in place. The need for action has been given added momentum by the commitments of the Scottish Parliament and Government to a low carbon future.

9.2 There is already much progress to celebrate, but there is also nothing wrong with acknowledging with candour that more progress is needed, to accelerate and coordinate activity so that it becomes widespread. Progress is being made but not in all schools; it needs to be and not just the well-resourced schools. The glass is both half full and half empty, but the glass is there, and so too is the basis for filling it.

Robust recommendations

9.3 Local authorities and Scottish Education will have renewed structures and processes in the next four years regardless of who wins the May 2011 election, and these will have to be delivered at a time of great financial difficulty. Against this background, those consulted share a remarkable, and unexpected, degree of consensus, and overall expressed strong support for the recommendations in this report. Even where they did not agree with one another (for example on the future role of local authorities in education) this does not affect the recommendations. The recommendations are not seeking any significant additional resources.

9.4 These recommendations are inter-dependent, and should be seen as a package. However, some need early action if they are to be timely. Recommendation 4a, the inclusion of SDE in the remit of the new SEQIA, is particularly urgent as there is limited time to secure this. Similarly on recommendation 4b, the work of SQA's Qualification Design Teams is well underway, and ensuring adequate SDE input during 2011 is also urgent.

9.5 The focus on statutory and policy options has resulted in a process orientated approach. However, those consulted have been unambiguous that what is needed is not a 'tick box' exercise. Taken together, the recommendations aim to identify the right levers to unlock the potential of the step change which the Curriculum for Excellence and *Learning for Change* set in motion. At its simplest, as one consultee put it: "the three drivers for embedding SDE are Curriculum, Inspection (HMIe) and Assessment (SQA) and it's potentially already there".

The Challenge: realising the shared agenda

9.6 The challenge is to realise that potential. Sustainable development education offers the key means for inter-disciplinary learning; it relates to the skills agenda; and can link life and the world around us to the school and classroom, enriching both. As such, SDE has enormous potential to contribute to CfE, just as CfE is the means to deliver SDE. The clear evidence (e.g. from Ofsted 2009) is that this is to mutual benefit, with progress in SDE contributing to more positive attitudes to learning in general, better behaviour and attendance, and to improved standards and achievement.

9.7 Ultimately, as noted several times in discussions in the course of this work, achieving this step change is also a matter of changing attitudes and values, and of winning hearts and minds. Two facets of this bigger picture should be highlighted: citizenship and language. As the research progressed, it became clear that there is more than overlap between sustainable development education and global citizenship education. They are both the same agenda, bringing together concerns for prosperity, contributing to a fair, equitable and inclusive society, appreciating the interdependence of people and nature, and developing an understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it. It is important that differences of language or terminology should not become barriers to a shared agenda.

9.8 It is vital too that language does not place SDE in a special or sectoral interest category. To secure engagement, it is vital to show both that SDE is relevant to many aspects of education, and that it leads to improved outcomes. To achieve the step change, SDE in schools must be understood by teachers and headteachers and seen as relevant to, and helpful for delivering, CfE and to making a positive contribution to all aspects of school life, and therefore of children's experiences.

9.9 The focus of this assignment has been on the policy dimensions of SDE in schools. Some of those consulted found it easier to talk about either higher order considerations (attitudes and values) or the practical steps to make progress. Towards the end of the consultations, the response "*I teach children*", provided a timely jolt to remember that in devising policy sight must not be lost of the importance of the child who should be at the centre of everything, and the school in which most SDE will take place. The WWF brief did not open with the aim of delivering SDE, but with ensuring that our children are equipped to participate in a sustainable society.

9.10 Finally, the overall impression is that SDE in Scottish schools stands at a threshold. There is good practice, but it is not yet commonplace. There are risks that progress will stall or retrench in the face of competing pressures and constrained (or even declining) resources. However, there is a supportive policy context and policy community. Curriculum for Excellence provides a huge opportunity to advance SDE in Scottish schools, just as SDE provides a means to help deliver CfE. The mood of those consulted is that this is not a situation in which to start afresh, but one to strengthen and build on the foundations already in place.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**Tim Birley for WWF Scotland
February 2011**

ANNEX 1: CONSULTEES

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David Beards Ω*	Scottish Funding Council (SFC)
Marco Biagi *	SNP Research
Keir Bloomer Ω	Independent Education Consultant; former member of the Curriculum Review Group
Jim Bruce Ω	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe)
Kate Campbell Ω*	Eco-Schools Scotland
Cllr Maureen Child #	City of Edinburgh Councillor; former SDC Commissioner
Ken Cunningham Ω*	School Leaders Scotland
David Doris *	Scottish Government
Eva Groeneveld *	WWF Scotland
Prof. Peter Higgins *	University of Edinburgh
Dr Alastair Lavery Ω	Sustainable Development Education Advisory Group
Prof. Kay Livingston Ω	Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS)
Betsy King Ω*	WWF Scotland
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Rosa Murray Ω*	General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS)
Simon Pepper #	formerly WWF Scotland and member of the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Sustainable Scotland
Alison Plummer Ω	Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
Gordon Shaw *	Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
Tim Simons Ω	Scottish Government
George Tarvit Ω*	Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN)
John Tracey Ω	Kingussie High School
Sasha Trifkovic Ω	Sustainable Development Commission Scotland
Morag Watson Ω*	WWF Scotland
Dr Tanya Wisely Ω*	Global Learning Project in Scotland

- # Initial, informal consultation
- Ω Interviewed
- * Attended consultation seminar

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3.2

A Smarter Scotland

3.2.1 Education

Performance as shown by Indicators



Overall progress towards sustainable development



Findings

- Learning for Change: Scotland's Action Plan for the Second Half of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD) was published in May 2010. The plan was produced through a collaborative process with significant stakeholder involvement and support. The actions contained in the plan are focused and credible. In addition, this plan has also made progress in including the community learning and development sector where, as we have highlighted in previous Assessments, there have in the past been weak links to educating for sustainability
- Commitments to embed sustainable development education in the inspection process and the National Qualifications are a significant step forward and a commitment to support Ecological/Carbon Footprinting activity in schools is a valuable new addition. We also welcome the recognition of outdoor learning as an essential element of Sustainable Development Education (SDE)
- Eco-Schools has been a highly successful programme and this agenda should be linked with wider sustainable development education.

The policy framework

Document (Strategy, Plan, Legislation, etc)	Comments
Learning for Change (2010)	Scotland's Action Plan for the Second Half of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development
Curriculum for Excellence (2008-ongoing)	Sets out Scottish Government's vision for transforming Scottish education.

Analysis of progress over the last year

2010 marks the halfway point of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD). The decade has been one of the most significant drivers of action in the area of sustainable development education (SDE). The Commission is supportive of the focus for activity the decade has provided. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that education happens in many places within society and therefore encompasses

a broader arena than that covered within the UNDESD. We must not forget the wealth and variety of SDE activity being undertaken in all areas of society that do not necessarily fall within the formal education sectors as we currently understand them.

An example of where a wide view of education has been taken effectively is IDEAS – Taking a Global Approach to Initial Teacher Education (ITE). This three-year initiative

funded by Department for International Development (DFID) has achieved significant Scottish stakeholder involvement. Its work has aimed to influence those in all sectors of formal and informal education and lifelong learning including teachers, policy makers, youth and adult education workers and a range of voluntary and statutory organisations. This valuable programme ended in August 2010 and we are pleased that funding for next three years has been secured from DFID as part of the UK-wide Global Learning Programme.

The Scottish Government has commissioned a teacher education review which will examine evidence about effective approaches to teacher education from within Scotland, elsewhere in the UK and internationally. It has adopted an open approach to its remit and the Commission urges the review team to ensure that SDE is considered and that the work and lessons of the IDEAS project are also capitalised on. The review will report to Ministers by the end of the calendar year so we cannot comment on its outcomes at this stage.

Learning for Change: Scotland's Action Plan for the Second Half of the UNDESD was published in May 2010. The process for producing this plan was collaborative with significant stakeholder involvement and support. The actions contained in the plan are focused and credible. In addition, this plan also includes the community learning and development sector. As we have highlighted in previous Assessments, this sector has had little involvement in SDE to date. The plan's Community

Learning and Development (CLD) section does not as yet cover the full breadth of community learning, such as that provided by voluntary community groups such as Transition Town groups, Development Trusts and Eco Congregations. We encourage the Scottish Government to ensure such work is also recognised and fostered as part of community learning approaches to SDE.

Commitments to embed sustainable development education in the inspection process and the National Qualifications are a significant step forward. Further commitment to support Ecological/Carbon Footprinting activity in schools is valuable. It also recognises the importance of outdoor learning as an essential element of SDE. In summary the actions within the plan have the potential to bring about substantial progress, though we have some reservations that the actions are predominantly output rather than outcome focused. We welcome the existence of a plan but remain unclear how it represents step change, nor is it clear how the plan will affect practice. It will be important to maintain the momentum gained so far through effective stakeholder engagement by the Government-led Action Plan groups for the schools and community learning sectors (the HE/FE one is led by SFC), which meet twice yearly to monitor progress on the actions in their respective parts of Learning for Change. We strongly encourage these groups to use the Action Plan as a base from which to develop a broad and far-reaching programme of strategic action.

Analysis of progress over the term of Government

Although the schools sector led the SDE agenda in Scotland in the early part of the UN Decade, there has been little evidence of any substantive progress since the publication of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) in 2008. However, the significant scale of change CfE represents for teachers means the implementation schedule has been understandably gradual. The Commission hopes that as it becomes more embedded in Scotland's schools, a more robust approach to SDE will emerge. We believe that CfE presents an excellent opportunity for making schools hubs of sustainable development learning and engagement in their communities.

The Scottish Government has continued to support the Eco-Schools Programme under this current Action Plan. While it delivers much valuable SDE in schools, Eco-Schools alone cannot deliver the whole SDE agenda for schools. For example it is not designed to develop teaching skills or build leadership capacity in the school's senior management team. Although leadership advisory groups have been set up by Learning Teaching Scotland and the Scottish Qualifications Authority, progress has been slow

and these have not yet led to the level of stakeholder input and collaborative working expected.

Despite inclusion of SDE across the CfE there is little evidence that teachers are sufficiently prepared to deliver SDE effectively. This is of particular concern given decreasing capacity in local authorities to support SDE in schools, mainly due to funding pressure. The Commission would question whether the education sector is currently equipped to address SDE skills and ensure a sufficient depth of understanding, as we have seen little evidence that approaches to SDE in the CfE ensure the thorough understanding needed for effective learning and cross-linking of relevant topic areas.

Over the course of the last five years, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), Scotland's Colleges and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) have made significant progress on SDE in the college sector. A post responsible for SDE within Scotland's Colleges has been established and an HMIE Aspect Report on Sustainability in Scotland's Colleges has been published. To date 90 per cent of Scotland's universities and colleges have

publicly declared their intention to address the challenges of climate change and reduce their carbon footprints by signing the Universities and Colleges Climate Commitment for Scotland.

The higher education sector has shown significant SDE leadership over the past four years, led by the SFC and the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges (EAUC). SFC funds the Higher Education Academy (HEA) to support subject, interdisciplinary and generic approaches to ESD through its subject networks. This has already led to greater engagement in the Scottish SDE agenda by this sector. Learning for Change provides a good framework for further progress in tertiary education.

The Learning for Change actions focus on working with the Community Learning and Development sector are a starting point for work on SDE in communities but a wider spread of action will be needed. An example of such action has been the Climate Challenge Fund, which enabled significant progress on SDE in communities, although its main focus was on carbon reduction with less focus on community learning and development. The Climate Challenge Funding will end on 31st March 2011 and we strongly support a continuation of the fund as it has made an important contribution to community learning on sustainability.

What needs to be done over the next term (2011–15)

Key individuals and organisations within the education sector needs to be aware and take ownership of the delivery of the Learning for Change Action Plan. A structure and process for monitoring the qualitative impact of the Action Plan should be established as soon as possible through a stakeholder driven process.

The Eco-Schools programme has been very successful in Scotland and an effective driver for certain aspects of SDE. Eco-Schools are an important part of the SDE agenda in schools but future reporting must be designed so that progress by Eco-Schools is not used as a proxy for progress.

Initial teacher education is an essential starting point for embedding SDE in a meaningful way. There are several

opportunities to ensure SDE is adequately provided for, both through the initial teacher education review and the Global Learning Project.

The higher and further education sectors have made good progress in recent years, particularly around campus sustainability. There is evidence that this momentum is being continued through ongoing work and monitored through an SFC-led HE/FE *Learning for Change* monitoring group. Such groups must take care in future reporting that, important as it is, progress on campus sustainability is not used as a proxy for progress on the whole SDE agenda in the tertiary sector.

Recommendations for Government for 2011–15

- Work with the SDE advisory groups to establish their remit and status with regard to the work of Learning Teaching Scotland and Scottish Qualifications Agency
- Establish a partnership between the statutory bodies responsible for Initial Teacher Education and voluntary sector organisations already working on this agenda.
- Ensure that the Teacher Education Review includes a robust provision for SDE

What the Commission will do

- Continue facilitating stakeholder engagement and discussion, for instance through an education for sustainable development conference in early 2011.