

Report from the UK RCEs meeting June 20th /21st 2017

Transforming together: the values and actions needed to respond to the UN SDGs in UK

1. Welcome and Introductions (see presentation [here](#))

Pete Higgins, Director RCE Scotland and University of Edinburgh and Rehema White, Chair RCE Scotland and University of St Andrews



This was the first meeting of the UK RCEs since June 2013 and was held as a follow-up to the European RCE meeting held in London in June 2016. The aims of the programme (see Appendix 1) were:

- Promoting the key values and actions needed to take forward SDGs at a time of insecurity and uncertainty
- Following up the European RCE meeting held in London June 2016
- Sharing the work of UK RCEs and learning from each other
- Promoting joint working across the UK RCEs and beginning to plan possible collaborative activities
- Enjoying networking with like-minded colleagues

The 26 participants drawn from 6 RCEs from across the UK (see Appendix 2) were welcomed to the event and Pete outlined the background history and context to the emergence of Scotland's UN RCE in ESD: Learning for Sustainability Scotland. The global scale of sustainability challenges was highlighted and the interconnectedness of environmental degradation and social inequalities. We were reminded that the UN SDGs present a compelling international agenda but they are not merely top down. UK RCEs have an opportunity to play a role in the domestic implementation of the SDGs.

2. **Advocacy and activism (see presentation [here](#))**

Esther Rutter, artist and Writer in Residence, GOSSIP, School of Geography and Sustainable Development, University of St Andrews

Along with the formal advocacy and planned outputs from the seminar such as a communique for policy makers, we wanted to retain the sense of engaging with local communities. As practitioners in Learning for Sustainability, we also wanted to recognise that it is not just *what* we focus on but also *how* we work and learn that is important with experiential, hands on learning as important as intellectual learning. Esther introduced a craftivism element to the conference, speaking of the origins of craftivism and yarn bombing and its links to domestic engagement in political debates. She introduced the project for today: to knit squares or to cut out squares from old jumpers to sew together a matrix of squares similar to the matrix of squares for the SDGs.

The crafted piece of art was hung in a tree outside to increase awareness of the activities within the conference venue, and will be taken to the European RCE Conference in September 2017.



3. **Feedback from European RCE Conference (see presentation [here](#))**

Ros Wade, RCE London

Ros summarised the outcomes of the successful European RCE conference with 17 RCEs in attendance held in London in June 2016. A poster session allowed people to share what they have been doing to contribute to the SDGs and GAP and there was a workshop on ESD skills. The issue of forced migration was important to the agenda. A draft position paper has been prepared and will be presented in the upcoming European conference. There was an input from the Transition Town movement and it is hoped that RCEs will maximise opportunities to link research with activism in different ways.

Communication has proved difficult. At a European level two appointed communicators were appointed to enhance linkages and planning across RCEs and countries, Ros Wade (RCE London) and Detlev Lindau-Bank (RCE Oldenburger- Munsterland). The UNESCO team ESD team is very small and part of the communicators' roles will be to proactively link with them and other parts of UNESCO. There is a desire for UK RCEs to work together and better communication is required.

4.	<p>Feedback from Global RCE Conference Yogyakarta (see presentation here)</p> <p><i>Margaret Fleming, RCE East Midlands</i></p> <p>Margaret presented her experience at the 2016 Global RCE conference and field visits in Yogyakarta. A European RCEs session reflected on achievements, challenges and opportunities. It was difficult with Skype technology but interesting to make connections with colleagues. A strategic discussion was undertaken on hopes and aspirations in regards to the contributions of RCEs to the global sustainability agenda. It would be useful for UK and European RCEs to consider how we can feed our voice into future global gatherings.</p>
5.	<p>Engaging with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</p> <p><i>Rob Bowden, Lifeworlds Learning</i></p> <p>This participative workshop explored the relationship between our values and the SDGs, exploring and reflecting on some of the underlying ideas and the challenges we face.</p> <p>Participants chose a Sustainable Development Goal poster and introduced themselves. We then answered the following questions and then discussed with another participant. <i>What are values? Why are values important? How do we acquire values?</i> The SDGs are influenced strongly by underpinning values. After the initial discussions we had a plenary view that Values are what motivates us, what we think is important and what we choose to prioritise.</p> <p>Values are often at the heart of who we are and cannot always be understood from the outside. They indicate who we are and how we are in the world, the relationships we form and the choices we make and are formed through our lived experience (home, media, childhood, social movements, education and more). We explored how we can influence change through understanding the values of ourselves, others and whole systems. Drawing on studies of ‘universal values’ (Martin Seligman (2002), Rushworth Kider (2005), Shalom Schwartz (1992) each of us completed an exercise in which we highlighted our top 5 values to achieve SDGs by 2030 and the top 5 values that are currently dominant in today’s society. We then stuck yellow for the former and red for the latter on a collective map. There was little overlap! The universal values theory would suggest that we all have all of these values, but we prioritise particular ones. Our priorities can change over time and with particular life events.</p> <p>Values that are likely to help progress the SDGs can be engaged through specific communications and experiences. There can be a see saw effect – engaging one set of values suppresses and discourages conflicting values and associated attitudes and behaviours. For example, focusing more on power related values tends to suppress universalism. Focusing on money based incentives can cause opposite actions from those desired because they do not engage values.</p> <p>Frames for values can include images and smells and words etc. Deep frames can encapsulate and present different sets of values. Frames can be negative and disempowering e.g. using destructive rainforest pictures can be disempowering to youth but showing an image of people planting trees can be empowering and cause people to think they can take action. We trialled allocation of different Goals within a Sustainable Development framework and had a stimulating discussion on the values underpinning different Goals.</p>
6.	<p>Responding to the UN SDGs in the UK and Scotland</p> <p><i>Rehema White, University of St Andrews and RCE Scotland and Betsy King, RCE Scotland</i> (see presentation here)</p> <p>Rehema spoke from the report that May East and she had completed in 2016 for COSLA and the Scottish Government. They had gone back to the history and emergence of sustainable development as a concept, with the recognition that ecological integrity and social justice were interconnected.</p>

Key points for action identified were the need for

- appropriate **SDG indicator** development and monitoring
- vertical alignment between local, national and global spheres of implementation and across sectors; **good governance**
- extensive and effective **partnerships**
- **support of communities** in the debate and delivery of our aspirations for the future
- the support of formal, informal and non-formal **learning for sustainability** to support all SDGs
- the **responsible use of sound science** and other knowledges
- engagement and partnership with the **private sector**
- exploration of sustainable routes to enhance **prosperity and wellbeing**
- building coherent plans of action between **domestic and international agendas**
- inspiring and enabling **young people** to contribute to SDG implementation

Betsy outlined the Scottish and UK context in terms of action and progress. The Global Action Programme post UN Decade of ESD remains important although Scotland's role within it has been limited. The Scottish Government made an early public commitment to the SDGs in 2015 and began to map the National Performance Framework and the National Action Programme on Human Rights across the SDG indicators.

The UK government produced a report on the UK approach to delivering the SDGs, [Agenda 2030: delivering the Global Goals](#) in March 2017, a rather thin document with no real mention of devolved administrations (such as Scotland). The [UK Environmental Audit Committee](#) ran a consultation 2016-2017 to which RCE Scotland and RCE London contributed and in April 2017 produced a critical report on the UK government's response to date. The UK Office of National Statistics has taken a strong role in managing the SDGs but there is no voice at the top of UK government supporting them. A consultation on indicators, delayed because of the election, is expected in June 2017. UK and Scotland still have a strong international development focus.

Open Government Pioneers project (see presentation [here](#))

Paul Bradley, Scottish Council for Voluntary organisations (SCVO)

The Open Government Partnership was set up by Barack Obama when global trust in government was very low. It is a collaboration between government and civil society and enables transparency and take the principles of government to actively filter them.

The UK wide two year [Open Government Pioneers](#) Project aims to building the capacity of citizens and civil society to use open government approaches to progress the SDGs. Scotland was selected as one of 15 partners, as a sub national partner with its own action plan. The OECD says that we should take an open government approach in implementing the SDGs. It promotes Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions in particular, but links to targets of other goals as well, about information and communication.

In Scotland there have been Government statements and there is cross party political support for the SDGs, but the Goals have not yet been fully embedded yet within different sectors and civil society is not fully engaged. The Open Government project now has a [wiki](#) page on which a platform has been created to enable interaction. The new SDG network within Scotland is an open space to let anyone join. It is a collaborative network with no leader www.globalgoals.scot

Discussion points

- International inputs to the SDGs are due in October 2017 and we should be pushing for UK inputs.
- [UKFIET, The Education and Development Forum](#) conference in September 2017 is on Learning and Teaching for Sustainable Development and there is an opportunity to contribute.
- The next UNESCO [Global Education Monitoring Report](#) Education Monitoring Report is due in

	<p>October 2017 and requires contributions from UK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is progress and support for work related to implementing learning and the SDGs in schools. UK wide funding is via the Department for International Development) for the Global Learning Programme in England, Scotland, Wales and N. Ireland. Scottish Government's Education and Climate Change Departments fund Eco-Schools Scotland and SG Education funds the Development Education Centres. The concluding report of Scotland's schools Learning for Sustainability National Implementation Group Vision 2030+ is framed around taking action on the SDGs. • RCEs are ideal partnerships to work for and promote the SDGs.
7.	<p>Advocating action on the SDGs in UK</p> <p>Small group discussions on how the RCEs can advocate UK Government action on the SDGs domestically focussed on developing a joint communique from the UK RCEs.</p> <p>A summary of group discussions answering the questions Why? What should it say? Who to? When by? Can be found in Appendix 3.</p> <p>ACTION POINTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Betsy King will develop a draft for discussion at a phone meeting with a group of volunteers: Rehema White, Margaret Fleming, Rob Bowden; Rebecca Petford; Ros Wade and Rowena Ewens
8.	<p>RCEs responding to the SDGs – Open Space discussions</p> <p>Discussion questions were generated by participants and attendees selected the theme of most interest to them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can RCEs support mainstreaming the SDGs into the 3-18 school curriculum? What support is available to schools in Scotland for this? • How can RCEs support refugees and migrants? • How are we giving Young People a voice to share what they are doing towards the SDGs? 2018 is Scotland's Year of Young People. • Developing collaborative projects: outdoor education for sustainable livelihoods; workshop guide for individuals to engage communities on SDGs and initiate local level action
9.	<p>Preparation for the European RCEs conference 8/9 September 2017, Dortmund</p> <p>Information about the upcoming Conference in Dortmund was shared. Several RCEs hoped to attend if funding was available.</p> <p>ACTION POINTS:</p> <p>It was agreed that the European meeting would be an opportunity for the UK RCEs to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share the communique developed for the UK Government (section 7 above) (Betsy to draft) • Display the SDGs craftivism developed during our meeting (section 2 above) (Betsy to take) • Share RCE materials developed by UK (All to contribute, Ros to compile) • Ask for SDGs and how we feed into future Global RCE conferences to be on the European conference agenda (Ros)
10	<p>Plenary Discussion</p> <p>ACTION POINTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK RCEs each to nominate a Youth Coordinator and contact Global RCE by 27 June 2017 (All) • A UK Youth Co-ordinator Representative is required. (Miriam? To be confirmed) • Send meeting report to UK RCEs with a questionnaire re website/activity/photo for European RCE meeting (Betsy/Ros)

- Send a Report of this meeting to Global RCE Service Centre (Betsy)
- Compile an up to date UK RCE mailing list (Ros)
- Bring back ideas/funding to the next UK RCE meeting, to be held at the time of the Brexit outcomes October/November 2018 (All)

Pete Higgins thanked everyone for their active participation. He highlighted the possibilities for RCEs to bring together partnerships that will promote sustainable development and the type of transformational learning that is needed to take forward the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals.

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Sharing International Perspectives in ESD – a discussion session

Following the seminar a discussion session was held with **Laura Johnson Collard, Executive Director of the Maryland Association of Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE)**, and also **Alistair Whitby, Senior Policy Officer for Future Justice at the World Future Council (WFC)**. This session was organised in partnership with Education Scotland.



With thanks to Scotland Malawi Partnership for the use of their SDGs display panels

Appendix 1

Seminar Programme

Tuesday 20th June 2017

- 14.00** **Welcome and introductions**
Pete Higgins, Director RCE Scotland, Rehema White, Chair RCE Scotland
Participative welcome
Feedback from European RCE (Ros Wade) and Global RCE (Margaret Fleming)
conferences
Introduction to Craftivism - artist Esther Rutter
- 14.30** **Engaging with the UN SDGs -1-**
Connecting our values with the UN SDGs (Rob Bowden)- Practical workshop
- 15.30** **Break**
- 15.45** **Engaging with the UN SDGs -2-**
Developing a shared values based frame to increase engagement in the UN SDGs
(Rob Bowden)- Practical workshop
Plenary discussion
- 17.30** **Networking drinks and nibbles**
- 18:30** **Close**

Wednesday 21st June 2017

- 09.30** **Responding to the UN SDGs in the UK**
UK and Scottish response, Rehema White, University of St Andrews and RCE Scotland
and Betsy King, RCE Scotland
Open Government Pioneers project, Paul Bradley SCVO
Discussion
- 10.30** **UK RCEs - Responding to the UN SDGs in the UK -1-**
Small group discussion: advocating action on the UN SDGs in the UK
Plenary
- 12.15** **Responding to the UN SDGs in the UK -2-**
Introduction to Open Space
- 12.30** **Lunch**
- 13.15** **Responding to the UN SDGs in the UK -2-**
Open Space discussions
Taking forward ideas for collaborative projects - partnership groups for further
action.
- 14.15** **Preparation for next European RCE conference**
Group discussion
Plenary
- 14.45** **Close**

Seminar Participants

Abi	Cornwall	RCE Scotland
Betsy	King	RCE Scotland
Charlotte	Dwyer	Scotdec
Charlotte	Holland	RCE Dublin/ City University - Institute of Education
Dugald	MacGilp	Eco-Schools Keep Scotland Beautiful
Emily	Mnyayi	Scotland Malawi Partnership
Esther	Rutter	Artist, University of St Andrews
Finn	Weddle	Permaculture Association (Scotland)
Gary	Walsh	Consultant
Hugh	Atkinson	RCE London
James	Cook	Perth High School
Josephine	McLaughlin	IDEAS
Jude	McKerrecher	Confucius Inst. for Scot. Schools
Kate	Allen	Scotdec
Laura	Curtis-Moss	RSPB Scotland
Lynn	Vickery	RCE London /LSBU
Margaret	Fleming	RCE East Midlands
Miriam	Webb	RCE Severn/University of Gloucestershire
Obehi Frances	Sule	RCE North East
Paul	Bradley	SCVO
Peter	Higgins	RCE Scotland/ University of Edinburgh
Rebecca	Petford	RCE Scotland/EAUC
Rehema	White	RCE Scotland/ University of St Andrews
Rob	Bowden	RCE East Midlands/Lifeworlds Learning
Ros	Wade	RCE London
Ruth	Bowbeer	Self-Employed

Developing a joint communique to advocate action on the SDGs in UK

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Why?	Lack of progress leading to results in UK. We are world leaders , but are lagging behind in action.	...Raise awareness Urgent action needed by Government Lagging internationally (egs of other countries)	...Role of RCEs –and the possibility of partnerships with Government	...Showcase activity elsewhere
What?	Press release format? Positive strong language of opportunity needed	...Current action on SDGs based on evidence Action plan needed for education in SDGs SMART specific asks	Positive, supportive, with a partnership focus Emphasise domestic as well as international agenda Use diagrams where possible Few acronyms	A CALL TO ACTION needed Frame with what the Government care about Aim requests at the centre, reorder asks Promote Hubs Point to Action
Who to?	Government at all levels UK and devolved administrations Local authoritiesCross party group on SDGs (chair Jack McConnell) Prince CharlesUse in RCEs to engage more partners	...Local as well as national government Messages promoted to and by RCE members and other partners
When by?	RCE Global Centre European conference	Before the European RCE conference On RCEs websites		Align with Brexit, use as an opportunity beyond the EU, making it explicit what RCEs are Press releases for members to use