

# ***Learning for Sustainability Scotland Scotland's UN Regional Centre of Expertise in ESD***

## ***Strategic Plan 2015-2020***

### **1. BACKGROUND**

There is an undeniable need for a world that is sustainable: where people and communities value and are engaged with the natural environment; societies are inclusive and equitable; and a vibrant economy contributes to flourishing ecosystems and social justice. In our interdependent world full of change and uncertainty, learning – in all its multitude of forms – has a key role in building the values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and confidence that people need to live more sustainable lives and contribute to sustainability - locally, nationally and globally.

Within UN processes, this form of learning is called Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). In Scotland, the term Learning for Sustainability (LfS) has been adopted. In schools, this reflects an extended concept that weaves together the three fields of Sustainable Development Education, Global Citizenship and Outdoor Learning. When LfS reaches its fullest potential, it is a transformative experience: changing our understanding of the world, our place in it and our interactions with it. LfS is a developing field and the form learning must adopt to reach its full transformative potential is not yet fully understood.

Learning for sustainability enables visioning of culturally and place specific futures and contributes to the creation of a fair and flourishing society and empowerment, particularly of the currently disempowered, whilst ensuring we live within ecological limits. Such learning uses innovative, reflexive and potentially transformative pedagogies and curricula to enable skills development and resilience and encourage people to explore values based worldviews. Learning-promoted action requires a systems based, interdisciplinary, partnership approach with strong leadership and integration across formal education and informal (such as community, business) and non-formal (such as media, culture) sectors. The role of LfS Scotland is to support networking and collaboration, releasing the potential of individuals, communities and sectors to create human and planetary wellbeing within local, national and global contexts.

Scotland has a long-standing commitment to Learning for Sustainability involving all aspects of learning: formal (e.g. schools, colleges, universities), non-formal (e.g. youth, adult, community, business) and informal (e.g. home, leisure). The UN's Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD 2005-14) catalysed activity in all sectors through two Action Plans<sup>1</sup> co-ordinated by the Scottish Government. As the Decade came to an end, the LfS community in Scotland considered that the establishment of a Scotland-wide United Nations recognized Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) was the most appropriate way to continue the work of promoting and supporting the concept and practice of LfS in Scotland. An RCE is a network of education organizations mobilised to deliver education for sustainable development at local and regional scale, recognized through the United Nations University.

The proposal to create Scotland's United Nations recognised RCE, the product of the work of a broad and committed community of interest (see Appendix 1), was accepted unconditionally by the United Nations University in December 2012. Scotland's UN University RCE - Learning for Sustainability Scotland, is hosted by the University of Edinburgh and part of an extensive and growing global network of more than 145 RCEs

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Scottish Government (2006) Learning for Our Future: Scotland's First Action Plan for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development and (2010), learning for Change: Scotland's Second Action Plan for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

(September 2016), allowing regions to share and learn from each other, and establish or strengthen international partnerships and collaboration.

## **2. PURPOSE**

### **2.1 Vision**

***Our vision is for Learning for Sustainability to infuse the whole of Scottish society, building our capacity to contribute to sustainability – locally, nationally and globally.***

### **2.2 Mission**

***Our mission is to work co-operatively to harness the transformative potential of Learning for Sustainability to support a sustainable world: where people and communities value and are engaged with the natural environment; societies are inclusive and equitable; and a vibrant economy contributes to flourishing ecosystems and social justice.***

### **2.3 Objectives**

Learning for Sustainability Scotland will work actively and co-operatively across all aspects of learning: formal (e.g. schools, colleges, universities); non-formal (e.g. youth, adult, community, business) and informal (e.g. home, leisure); to advance the understanding and practice of Learning for Sustainability in Scotland so it reaches its full transformative potential for change by

- 1. Identifying and sharing existing knowledge, expertise and lessons learned** between Scotland's educators, institutions and communities
- 2. Actively generating new knowledge and approaches** to Learning for Sustainability through cooperative partnerships, projects, initiatives and research
- Undertaking **monitoring, evaluating, international comparison and gap analysis of progress** on Learning for Sustainability in Scotland
- 4. Providing Learning for Sustainability advice to practitioners, policy- and decision-makers**
- 5. Sharing our learning internationally** and providing a mechanism for members to learn from others around the world as part of the UNU RCE Network.
- 6. Ensuring the long-term future of Learning for Sustainability Scotland**

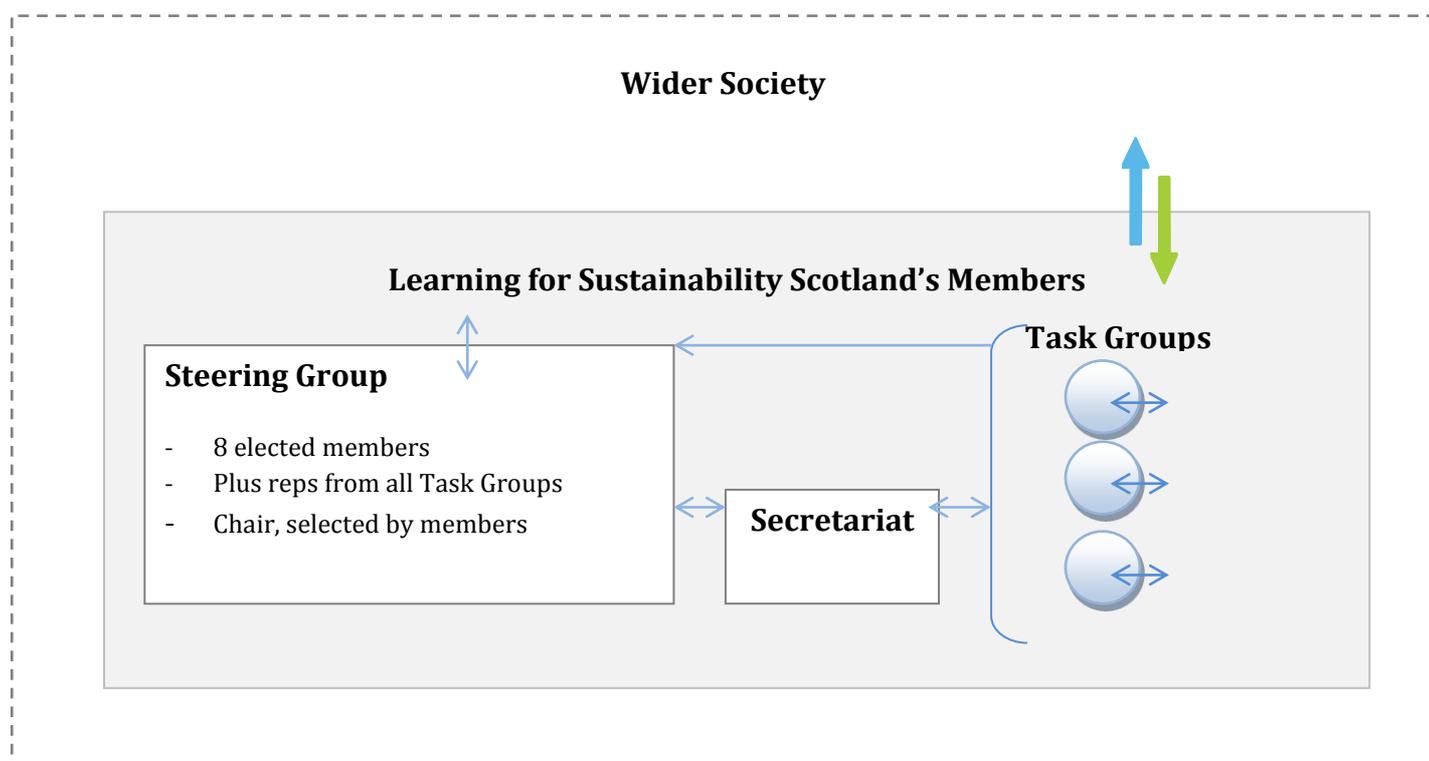
In achieving these strategic objectives activities 2015-2020 will focus on the following goals:

- Maintaining the momentum achieved during the UN DESD in LfS in Scotland through national actions, the Global Action Programme and the Sustainable Development Goals
- Running events for members both within and across sectors, for example, from school to FE or HE; across formal education and community ventures
- Working closely with government to influence policy development and implementation
- Catalysing deeper engagement across members, sharing resources and good practice
- Pursuing the implementation of LfS within the school sector, including developing and disseminating teacher education at all stages in response to the new GTCS Professional Standards
- Building on community development and in particular sustainable business models for communities
- Focusing on areas with less progress, for example, early years and HE, and develop closer links with business and mainstream media
- Working with local authorities to influence sustainability action; a critical intersection between national government and community
- Ensuring the long-term future of Learning for Sustainability Scotland
- Contributing to the conceptualisation as well as practice of this field

### 3. GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Learning for Sustainability Scotland (LFS Scotland) is shaped collectively by the Learning for Sustainability (LFS) community in Scotland. Its work is underpinned by the principles of equity, openness, co-operation and transparency.

The governance and management structure that has been established is intended to enable members, no matter what their organisational size or working sector, to come together on an equitable basis to work co-operatively to advance LFS knowledge and practice, sharing learning nationally and internationally. The structure is also intended to ensure that all viewpoints can be heard, all perspectives considered and that policy-making is based on the best available expertise. The structure will be regularly reviewed to ensure that the aspirations of LFS Scotland are being met.



#### 3.1 Members

Membership of LFS Scotland is open to individuals and organisations in Scotland that contribute to Learning for Sustainability in Scotland, adhering to the organisation's Vision, Mission and Objectives. Members complete an application form but membership is free; members may pay a differential rate for non-funded events and seminars.

Members of LFS Scotland are entitled to attend LFS Scotland events, participate in initiatives and vote in the decision-making processes of the LFS Scotland including the Annual Meeting of members at which the Steering Group will be elected. Members will be given at least 21 days notice of the date of the Annual Meeting. The quorum at an Annual Meeting shall be at least 8 members. This number may be reviewed at an Annual Meeting. All questions arising at any meeting shall be decided by a simple majority vote of those present. In the case of an equality of votes, the Chair of the meeting will have a casting vote. However, it will be a principle of all decision-making that consensus will be sought wherever possible.

### **3.2 Steering Group**

The purpose of the LfS Scotland Steering Group is to represent members, providing strategic advice and direction to support Learning for Sustainability Scotland's Vision, Mission and Objectives by:

- Ensuring that activities undertaken by Learning for Sustainability Scotland meet with its agreed Vision, Mission and Objectives
- Providing expertise, advice and support to the Secretariat in delivering the Vision, Mission and Objectives
- Contributing to the development of the Strategic Plan and Annual Work Plans
- Signing off the Strategic Plan and Annual Work Plans on behalf of members
- Encouraging and approving Task Group initiation and receiving Task Group reports
- Receiving and reviewing progress and financial reports as appropriate
- Helping to strengthen and extend the membership of LfS Scotland
- Helping to build the profile of LfS Scotland nationally and internationally
- Providing expertise, advice and support to secure the organisational and financial sustainability of LfS Scotland

#### **3.2.1 Steering Group - Membership**

The Steering Group is responsible to the members and will normally meet at least 4 times a year.

The Steering Group will consist of elected members and Task Group representatives.

At the Annual Meeting members will elect a maximum of 8 representatives from the membership, for a 2 year term, to steer LfS Scotland on their behalf. Should the number of members willing to serve on the Steering Group exceed 8, selection will be by secret ballot. Members willing to serve on the Steering Group should inform the Secretariat of their intention at least 7 days before the Annual Meeting. Any member willing to continue to serve on the Steering Group after a two year term can present themselves for re-election. Because there is a risk to continuity and organisational memory in the case of a new Steering Group being elected, the new Group will have to right to co-opt one or more members from the previous Group for a period of one year. Each Task Group will also elect one member to represent them on the Steering Group.

Steering Group members will elect one of their number as Chair and one as Vice Chair of the Group. All questions arising at any meeting shall be decided by a simple majority vote of those present. In the case of an equality of votes, the Chair of the meeting will have a casting vote. However, it will be a principle of all decision making that consensus will be sought wherever possible. Members of the Secretariat will participate in the Steering Group as non-voting members. Additional non-voting members will be invited to attend Steering Group meetings and may be coopted onto the Group to provide expertise as required.

#### **3.2.2 Steering Group Chair - Role**

The role of the Steering Group Chair is to:

- Act as principal contact between the Steering Group and the Secretariat
- Create meeting agendas, in association with the Secretariat
- Chair meetings of the Steering Group, LfS Scotland Conference and other appropriate meetings
- Sign off draft minutes of Steering Group meetings before circulation
- Sign off communications, statements and decisions such as policy consultation responses, briefings and statements to the media, made by LfS Scotland on behalf of its members.
- Sign letters on behalf of LfS Scotland
- Act as primary media spokesperson for LfS Scotland.

The Vice Chair will represent the Chair in this role when required.

### **3.3 Task Groups**

The purpose of LfS Scotland's Task Groups is to enable members to work individually or together to carry out specific pieces of work or projects that relate to the Vision, Mission and Objectives of LfS Scotland.

#### **3.3.1 Task Group Ways of Working**

Task Groups will be initiated by members according to need and interest. They are likely to be short lived and action-orientated with a well-defined purpose.

The LfS Scotland Steering Group will receive and approve applications to initiate a Task Group to ensure that the work of the Task Groups is aligned with the Vision, Mission and Objectives of LfS Scotland. Task Groups may be commissioned by the Steering Group for specific strategic purposes. Each Task Group will appoint one of its members to represent it on the Steering Group and attend LfS Scotland Steering Group meetings. This representative will report on the work of their Task Group to other Steering Group members to ensure continued alignment with the Vision, Mission and Objectives of LfS Scotland and the on-going co-ordination of work across Task Groups.

A nominated contact person from the LfS Scotland Secretariat will liaise with a nominated contact person from each Task Group assisting with the development of their Work Plans and funding proposals. This will ensure Task Group plans are presented in a consistent manner and LfS Scotland fundraising activities are coordinated.

A Communications Protocol will be agreed between each Task Group and the Secretariat setting out how general communications between group members will take place, how external communications (e.g. with government, media and funders) will take place and who will take responsibility for these. The Communications Protocol will also include an agreement on the use of logos and LfS Scotland letterhead. All Communication Protocols will be subject to the agreement and sign off of the Steering Group.

#### **3.3.2 Task Group Responsibilities**

Each Task Group will be responsible for:

- Identifying the LfS Scotland members involved in the Task Group and communicating this to the LfS Scotland Steering Group via the Secretariat
- Appointing a person to represent the Task Group on the LfS Scotland Steering Group
- Appointing a nominated contact person to take responsibility for liaising with the Secretariat
- With support from the Secretariat, developing a Work Plan for the Task Group identifying:
  - how the Group's work will contribute to LfS Scotland objectives
  - the Group's objectives, the activities that will be carried out, the intended results and timescale
  - the resources (people, funding or other) needed to carry out the work and how these will be secured
- In liaison with the Secretariat, develop funding proposals and funding applications to secure resources required
- Reporting to funders where required
- Undertaking the proposed activities to the agreed budget and timescale
- Agreeing a Communications Protocol to be approved by the Steering Group
- Providing quarterly financial and progress reports for LfS Scotland Steering Group meetings
- Contributing to the LfS Scotland Annual Work Plan

### **3.4 Secretariat**

The Secretariat is responsible to members through the Steering Group, and comprises staff and members of LfS Scotland, with specific skills, who are co-opted through the Steering Group. The Secretariat will be

managed by the Director of LfS Scotland, who will be drawn from the host organisation staff. The Director of LfS Scotland will be responsible for ensuring that the running of LfS Scotland complies with the legal, financial and charitable standards of the host organisation.

## **4. RESOURCES**

### **4.1 Host organisation**

In the two years prior to the establishment of LfS Scotland, the University of Edinburgh provided financial and administrative support for the development of the LfS Scotland application. Now that LfS Scotland has been established, the University of Edinburgh has offered to host LfS Scotland and provide administrative support as an in-kind contribution.

The in-kind support from the University of Edinburgh includes the provision of office accommodation for the LfS Scotland staff within the Moray House School of Education Campus, Edinburgh and full servicing for the Centre including payroll, HR, telephone and internet, IT support and the use of University meeting spaces. LfS Scotland will also operate under the University of Edinburgh's charitable status. This will avoid the need for LfS Scotland to audit and report its activities separately to meet the requirements of the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulators (OSCR). Instead, the activities and financial transactions of LfS Scotland will be included in the University of Edinburgh OSCR return, removing a significant financial and administrative burden from LfS Scotland.

Whilst LfS Scotland will be housed within the University of Edinburgh, it will be an autonomous body, with its own Vision, Mission, Objectives and strategic decision-making power. As part of the hosting agreement with the University of Edinburgh, and as a condition of LfS Scotland operating under the University's charitable status, LfS Scotland is expected to operate in a manner compliant with the University's internal HR and accounting procedures, policies and regulations.

### **4.2 Staff**

The current (2015) LfS Scotland Secretariat comprises:

Director of Learning for Sustainability Scotland – Professor Peter Higgins (from 1st April 2013)

The Director is appointed by the host organisation, and will be responsible for managing LfS Scotland staff and ensuring that the running of LfS Scotland complies with the legal, financial and charitable standards of the host organisation. The Director's post is supported by the University of Edinburgh, allowing Professor Higgins to give time to LfS Scotland.

Learning for Sustainability Scotland Development Manager (0.6 FTE) – Betsy King (from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2013)

The Development Manager post will take the lead on working with members to develop and coordinate LfS Scotland initiatives and will support the development of core LfS Scotland business.

Learning for Sustainability Scotland Development Officer (0.75 FTE) – Abi Cornwall (from June 2013)

The Development Officer will also be responsible for project management and will take the lead in organising the LfS Scotland office and delivering services to members.