

## **Celebrating ten years of Learning for Sustainability Scotland**

### **Speech by Jenny Gilruth MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills**

I am delighted to have this opportunity to be here with you celebrating the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Learning for Sustainability Scotland.

As you all know, LfS Scotland is Scotland's United Nations University-recognised Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development.

The Scottish Government has always been a strong advocate for the contribution made by the Centre, and I am very proud to be able to provide the address today.

As some in the audience may recall, the government's support for the centre began in 2012 when Alasdair Allan, as the Minister for Learning, Science & Scotland's Languages wrote to UNESCO in support of the centre's application to be hosted at the University of Edinburgh.

Since then, the Centre has gone on to play a key role in promoting and embedding sustainability education in our curriculum.

Two of the most important contributions are through your professional learning and through the leadership that LfS Scotland gives our teachers across Scotland.

Many in this room will be familiar with your innovative work with the GTCS in developing the Learning for Sustainability Hub.

You also continue play a key role in communicating what we *mean* by sustainability education and why it is important; through your members' e-bulletin, monthly sessions to educators and the LfS Hub, which shares a host of resources for teachers and educators and allows them to share their own experiences and insights on LfS.

The "MOOCs" are significant undertakings - and I know are greatly appreciated by those who take part, including Ministerial colleagues who have given introductions to the course.

But your role goes beyond research, professional learning, and “spreading the word” on LfS; you have played a key role in creating the concept itself, in sharing the approach internationally and in developing a coalition for change.

Learning for Sustainability is a really good example of the connections that are important across our curriculum, and across government portfolios.

In the curriculum, it of course reaches across subject areas.

LfS Scotland has helped to articulate what this means, and has helped to support teachers to translate this into practice in our primary schools and our secondary schools. You have helped to raise our ambition for LfS to cover not just what children learn, but *how* they learn and the environment in which they learn.

When we refer to LfS as a “whole school approach”, covering not just curriculum but the school estate, pupil voice and other aspects, we need to acknowledge the role played by the Centre in developing this approach.

*[At this point the Cabinet Secretary shared some personal reflections on her own experiences as a former modern studies teacher; including the relevance of global citizenship and learning about sustainability across subject areas.]*

There is significant interest in and support for, Learning for Sustainability from Ministerial portfolios across government, and the Centre has also played a role in achieving this broad support.

The Sustainable Development Goals – championed by the Centre as a learning and teaching tool for LfS - are the means by which we can see those connections and a very powerful way to support learning and teaching on sustainability education.

The connections are also reflected in the networks of people and organisations that the Centre have developed across Scotland and internationally; networks which are very much valued by those who seek to promote and support LfS, and by the civil servants within the Scottish Government.

The work that you do remains ever more important as we seek to reform and update our curriculum; and as we grapple with a climate and biodiversity crisis.

There is a clear demand for better, more comprehensive sustainability education, from our teachers and from our pupils.

In Scotland, we know from the recent National Discussion on education that young people regard LfS as a key priority.

To quote directly from Ken Muir's report on Scottish education, published in March 2022, Learning for Sustainability is *"particularly important given the increased profile and relevance of climate change to the current and future generations of children and young people."*

And if Scotland is to meet its ambitious climate change targets to become net zero by 2045 we must ensure our young people continue to benefit from the best and most innovative approaches to LfS education.

The implementation of our new national action plan on LfS is a key priority for the next seven years up to the 'Target 2030' end point of the plan.

This is why our national LfS Action Plan contains a formal Call to Action – a Call to Action which LfS Scotland played a key part in developing and sharing with the education system.

I want to thank LfSS not just for your on-going support and engagement with education officials, and for the expertise that you share, but for that broader network and coalition that you have helped to develop over the years.

From the regular policy papers, research and consultation feedback you provide, to your involvement in supporting delivery of our new LfS Action Plan, I can see the very strong relationship that you have forged with partners across the education sector.

This is a relationship that will continue to grow as we work together to support young people in engaging with a greener and more sustainable future.

LfS Scotland is a small team but you are a team who achieve a great deal, and I want to end by making some very specific mentions for the members of the team.

Of course, I must mention Professor Peter Higgins, who has played a central role in developing the concept of Learning for Sustainability over the years, in sharing our approach with other countries and – occasionally, and in the nicest possible way – challenging government officials and partners to be more ambitious!

I want to thank Betsy King who joined the Centre as Development Manager in 2013 and has made such a significant contribution to policy development and practice in Scotland.

I want to mention Kirsten Leask who was involved as a member of the LfS Scotland Steering Group in 2013 and then as Project Manager in 2019.

And finally, Jenny Haggarty who provides administrative and finance support.

Congratulations on the past 10 years. I, and my officials, look forward to continue working with Learning for Sustainability Scotland and wish you every success in the future.