



Learning for Sustainability Scotland Annual Report

January - December 2023



COP28 Schools' Climate Negotiations Simulation, November 2023, Edinburgh

1. BACKGROUND

Scotland has a long-standing commitment to Learning for Sustainability (LFS) 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 (2005-14) catalysed activity in all sectors through two Action Plans¹ co-ordinated by the Scottish Government. As the Decade came to its end, the LFS community in Scotland considered that the establishment of a Scotland-wide United Nations University-recognised Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) was the most appropriate way to continue the work of promoting and supporting the concept and practice of LFS in Scotland. The United Nations University (UNU) unconditionally accepted the proposal to create Scotland's RCE in December 2012 and the first AGM of Scotland's UNU-recognised RCE, **'Learning for Sustainability Scotland'**, was held on October 22nd 2013. Since its launch, Learning for Sustainability Scotland has been very active in Scotland, the UK and globally. More information on projects and partnerships can be found on the website and in past Annual Reports. This report details activities in 2023, our tenth year.

2. GOVERNANCE

The Learning for Sustainability Scotland ('LFS Scotland') Steering Group represents members: providing strategic advice and direction to support LFS Scotland's Vision, Mission and Objectives. Their roles and responsibilities are set out in the [LFS Scotland Strategic Plan 2020-25](#).

Our eight elected Steering Group members, elected in January 2023 were:

- Alan Bainbridge (Queen Margaret University)
- Jim Milton (Webster's High School)
- Eirini Gallou (University of Strathclyde)
- Fiona Craig (Scottish Qualifications Authority)
- Laura Curtis-Moss (2050 Climate Group)
- Rebecca Petford (Greener Kirkcaldy)
- Rehema White (University of St Andrews)
- Sara Smith (Royal Highland Education Trust)

Rehema White was re-elected as Steering Group Chair in March 2023, and Laura Curtis-Moss as Vice-Chair. Kathrin Mobius (EAUC Scotland) continued to be co-opted to the Steering Group to provide Tertiary Sector expertise.

There are currently three 'Action Groups' with the following representation on the Steering Group during this period:

- Further and Higher Education: Rehema White (University of St Andrews)
- Community and Sustainable Development Goals: Rehema White
- Heritage: Ullrich Kockel (University of the Highlands and Islands).

Laura Curtis-Moss continued to work as Scotland's RCE Youth Coordinator (from September 2017).

Professor Pete Higgins, University of Edinburgh and Director of LFS Scotland, managed the Secretariat. An Executive Group comprising the Director, Chair and the Secretariat met on a number of occasions to facilitate

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*.

planning and action. Over this period, the Steering Group and Secretariat continued work based on the [Strategic Plan](#) for LfS Scotland for the period from 2020-2025 and work plan for 2022-23; set in the context of the [UNU-IAS Roadmap for the RCE Community 2021-30](#). The Steering Group also reviewed fundraising activities, supported Action and Task Group activities, led on and contributed to various policy consultations, engaged formally and informally with Scottish Government and contributed to national and global fora as detailed below.

3. MEMBERSHIP

Learning for Sustainability Scotland has 986 members based in Scotland and a total of 1,157 bulletin subscribers (December 2023); comprising a blend of individuals, groups and organisations.

4. EMPLOYEES

During this period, Betsy King was employed as Development Manager (0.6 FTE), Jenny Haggarty as Administration and Finance Officer (0.75 FTE) and Kirsten Leask as Project Manager (1 FTE). Project consultants engaged by LfS Scotland were Mary Collacott, Sophie Coats, Angela Farnish and Katie Grant.

5. RESOURCES

The University of Edinburgh has generously hosted LfS Scotland and provided administrative support as an in-kind contribution since its inception. This has included the provision of office accommodation for LfS Scotland staff within the Moray House School of Education and Sport campus, and full servicing for the Centre including payroll, HR, telephone and internet, IT support and the use of University meeting spaces. LfS Scotland operates under the University of Edinburgh's charitable status.

Other than this University of Edinburgh resource and support from grants for specific projects, LfS Scotland is self-funding. It has no recurrent direct grant for core activities from the Scottish Government or any other source, but continues to be free for members to join and receive the benefits of this membership. Every year the organisation secures funding to keep operating, and we were again fortunate this year to be successful in funding bids. Such grants, however, all require services to be delivered and there continues to be no core funding to support staffing, and currently salaries are underwritten by Moray House School of Education and Sport. We delivered the core work of LfS Scotland through University of Edinburgh resources, and more general support from the Steering Group and other members.

During 2023, LfS Scotland's activities were supported through grant and fee-earning from projects (British Council, Cairngorms National Park Authority (via Heritage Lottery), Education Scotland's STEM CLPL Grant, Erasmus+ (2020-2023), GTC Scotland, University of Edinburgh and QAA (Qualifications Assurance Agency for Higher Education)). The LfS Scotland team and members of the Steering Group continue to develop additional proposals for longer-term funding.

6. ACTIVITIES

Our pan-sectoral activities in 2023 were developed in response to findings from the 2022 Members Survey.

6.1 MAILING LIST AND BULLETIN

A [monthly e-bulletin](#) containing an update on LfS Scotland activities and highlighting information on events, courses, resources, policy and funding news, the latest job vacancies and the work of different organisations

in the field of Learning for Sustainability, was compiled by Editor Katie Grant and distributed to members. Since March 2022, a quarterly [Policy and Research e-bulletin](#) has also been compiled for members.

6.2 WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

We continue to update [our website](#) in line with comments and suggestions from members. Our online presence is further complemented by use of several social media platforms. Our [X](#) (formerly known as [Twitter](#)) [presence](#) was further enhanced in 2023, with an increase to 7,517 followers (December 2023). In addition, a Learning for Sustainability Scotland [LinkedIn site](#) was created which now has 1,060 followers (Dec 2023). On Facebook, we have 687 followers and our newly-established Instagram account now has 75 followers.

6.3 PRESENTATIONS AND WORKSHOPS

Following consultation with members, most events and workshops organised by ourselves and others continued to take place online. During 2023, presentations and workshops were organised by, or delivered on behalf of LfS Scotland at the following conferences, webinars and seminars:

2023	Event	Presentation(s) by LfS Scotland	Event organized by LfS Scotland (many in partnership)
January	Learning for Sustainability in Scotland's Schools (UoE PGDE)	X	
January	LfS Scotland AGM and annual gathering	X	X
January	Learning for Sustainability and GTCS Professional Standards: a focus on professional learning	X	X
February	Learning for Sustainability and Initial Teacher Education (with GTC Scotland)	X	
February	Bringing the Curriculum to Life: STEM and LfS	X	X
February	'Sustainability, Employability and Youthwork' (webinar with Youthlink Scotland)	x	x
March	'Teach the Future: Parliamentary Reception'	X	
March	Cairngorms National Park (with Highland One World)	X	
March	Learning for Sustainability and GTCS Professional Standards 'LfS and the National Improvement Framework' (with GTC Scotland)	X	X
March	Learning for Sustainability and Initial Teacher Education – policy update (with GTC Scotland)	X	
April	ESD in Scotland (for ESD Supervision Erasmus+ project, Latvia/Lithuania)	X	
April	QAA ESD Guidance (UoE Teaching Climate and Sustainability: Community of Practice launch)	X	X
April	Community Learning and Development and Learning for Sustainability (with Education Scotland)	X	
April	Learning for Sustainability in Scotland (Cornell University/ UoE knowledge exchange webinar)	X	

April	Learning for Sustainability in Scotland (UoE Return to Teaching course)	X	
April	'Student-led ESD approaches and initiatives': EAUC Scotland Topic Support Network in Education for Sustainable Development / LfSS Action Group in FE/HE	X	
April	Learning for Sustainability and GTCS Professional Standards: Learner voice and LfS (with GTC Scotland)	X	X
May	'Sustainability Champions Network' (with City of Edinburgh Council)	X	X
May	Community Learning and Development and equalities (with Education Scotland and WoSDEC)	X	
May	Ethics and the Teaching Profession': roundtable (provocation, Dr Beth Christie)	X	
May	Learning for Sustainability in Dumfries and Galloway	X	
May	Learning for Sustainability and GTCS Professional Standards: Celebrating Teaching and Learning approaches to LfS (with GTC Scotland)	X	X
May	Learning for Sustainability and the National Outcomes for Scotland (with Scottish Government)	X	X
May	Learning in a Changing Climate: a Peruvian-Scottish cultural exchange (with University of St Andrews)	X	X
June	Monitoring and evaluating education for sustainable development (senior managers) (with QAA, University of St Andrews, EAUC Scotland)	X	X
June	Monitoring and evaluating education for sustainable development (academics) (with QAA, University of St Andrews, EAUC Scotland)	X	X
June	ESD in Scotland (for ESD Supervision Erasmus+ project, Czech Republic)	X	
June	'Learning and Teaching for a Better World' at CDN Virtual College Expo23 (with EAUC-Scotland)	X	
June	'ESD Quality and Monitoring' at UK EAUC conference on <i>Conversations for Climate Solutions</i> at University of Bath	X	
July	Transformational Learning (UoE Teaching Climate and Sustainability: Community of Practice)	X	
August	Catalysing a Movement for Change (for ESD Supervision Erasmus+ project)	X	X
September	Youthwork and the refreshed LfS Action plan 2021-2030 ('roundtable' webinar with Youthlink Scotland)	X	X
September	'How do we build a Movement for Change?' 'Linking ESD Experiences across all Levels of Education' 'Monitoring and Evaluating Education for Sustainable Development'	X	X

	(three different presentations at the online European RCE meeting)		
September	'Monitoring and Evaluating Education for Sustainable Development' at QAA UK conference	X	
September	Scotland's Learning for Sustainability Action Plan 2021-30 and the GTCS Professional Standards (with GTC Scotland)	X	X
October	STEM and Learning for Sustainability Lab (with Fife Council)	X	
October	Cairngorms 2030: Climate Learning and Education Project: Shared Learning Event with key local partners (with Cairngorms National Park Authority)	X	
October	Learning for Sustainability and GTCS Professional Standards: towards a whole setting approach' (with GTC Scotland)	X	X
October	Contemplative and Dialogic Pedagogies: (UoE Teaching Climate and Sustainability: Community of Practice)	X	X
November	Learning for Sustainability in Initial Teacher Education (GTC Scotland TEIs meetings)	X	X
November	'Climate Champions Day' (presentation to authority-wide teacher network, in collaboration with Dumfries & Galloway Council)	X	
November	Nature and Climate Confident Teaching - EAUC Scotland Topic Support Network in Education for Sustainable Development / LfSS Action Group in FE/HE	X	
November	European RCEs 2022-23 (at 16th Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the RCEs meeting, Kuala Lumpur)	X	
November	Capacity Building for a Whole Community Approach (panel discussion, Global RCE Conference, Kuala Lumpur)	X	
November	How do we know it's working? Monitoring and Evaluating ESD in Higher Education (case study presentation at Global RCE Conference, Kuala Lumpur)	X	
November	Learning for Sustainability (at Leadership in STEM course, SSERC)	X	
November	Learning for Sustainability and GTCS Professional Standards: Memorandum on Entry Requirements for Teaching (with GTC Scotland)	X	X
November	COP28 briefing for teachers and students	X	X
November	Bringing the Curriculum to Life: STEM and LfS (teachers collaboration session)	X	X
November	Good Education in a Fragile World (SERA conference symposium)	X	
November	'Learning about ecovillage learning: framing and collaboration' at ReGEN4All online workshop on community learning	X	
December	Learning for Sustainability and GTCS Professional Standards: Target 2030 Sustainable Settings (with GTC Scotland)	X	X

December	'Towards transgressive pedagogies in universities: a call for personal and academic integrity' at the Transgressive Pedagogies Workshop In Memoriam Rachel Howell, University of Edinburgh	X	

6.4 WORKSHOPS, WEBINARS and EVENTS

The following offers more detail on some of the workshops, webinars and events organized during the year to give a flavour of the range of activities undertaken.

6.4.1 AGM January 2023

Our 2022 AGM was held online on 11th January 2023, and we were delighted to welcome a wonderfully diverse range of members from across the many educational sectors that comprise the Learning for Sustainability Scotland membership. Exploration of the theme '[Inspiring Transformational Change through Learning](#)' provided a chance to hear from keynote speaker Heleentje Swart, from our sister organisation RCE Fryslân, Netherlands and programme leader in Circulair Friesland, who is working to transform the Friesland Region through Learning for Sustainability.

Some of our members also shared inspiring stories of transformational learning. Naomi Dixon from YouthLink Scotland provided an insight into the [Scotland's Young People's Forest initiative](#); Keith Turner from [Speyside High School](#) shared more about how he is integrating Global Citizenship Approaches into the curriculum across the Broad General Education; and Craig Leitch from [Greener Kirkcaldy](#) shared more about how his organisation is working with the Climate Action Fife Partnership to tackle a myriad of social and economic – as well as ecological – issues with local communities in Fife. Small group discussions then explored the nature of 'Transformational Change through Learning', and how LfS Scotland might support collaboration to inspire a step-change in such learning in and across all sectors.

6.4.2 Catalysing a 'Movement for Change'

In June 2023 the Scottish Government launched Scotland's refreshed Learning for Sustainability action plan 2023-30 – '[Target 2030: A movement for people, planet and prosperity](#)'. This aims to 'build an inspiring movement for change so that every 3 to 18 place of education becomes a sustainable learning setting by 2030'. The Plan was launched in the context of educational reform and system change in Scotland; offering a potentially ground-breaking opportunity to responding to the values, skills and knowledge that are required for learners to thrive in an increasingly complex and interdependent world.

Ahead of the Plan's national '[Call to Action](#)' in December 2023, and in the concluding stages of the Erasmus+ ESD SuperVision partnership project, we invited a cross-sectoral group of 40 people from within and outwith the education sector to bring ideas and perspectives to a round-table event to explore and uncover the essential ingredients which will catalyse this 'Movement for Change'. Participants had the opportunity to reflect and discuss on the nature of a movement for change, the key success factors, common barriers and how they could be overcome. There was an opportunity for open-space discussion and participants heard a range of perspectives from guest speakers; including Professor Graham Donaldson, Helena Good from Daydream Believers, Mike Robinson from the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, Ian Menzies from Education Scotland, and Lang Banks from WWF Scotland. A [full report from the meeting](#) has been widely shared, including with the Scottish Government's Learning for Sustainability Leadership Group.

6.4.3 Youth work and Learning for Sustainability

YouthLink Scotland and LfS Scotland continued our jointly-hosted series of webinars; exploring the role of Learning for Sustainability in youth work settings.

Aligning with the national Learning for Sustainability Action Plan and the priorities of the Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan, [‘Sustainability, Employability and Youthwork: developing skills for a sustainable and just future’](#) our activity built on previous sessions to explore and discuss how youthwork/school-based practitioners could support young people to engage with ‘green jobs’ and improve employability.

Contributions from Ian Menzies, Education Scotland and Naomi Dixon, YouthLink Scotland set the scene. Jennifer Ba from SCOREscotland, also outlined ways in which they are supporting young people from diverse ethnic communities to focus on skills development and confidence-building through sustainability

In September, ahead of the ‘Call to Action’ for Scotland’s refreshed national Learning for Sustainability Action Plan, a ‘roundtable’ was held with key individuals in Youth work organisations to discuss and examine the Plan and its relevance to youth work and consider how youth work organisations could [engage with the LfS Action Plan’s Target 2030 ‘Call to Action’](#). This was followed in October by an event for youth work and Community Learning and Development (CLD) practitioners, with inputs from Julie Beckett, CLD lead Education Scotland and youth worker Andrea McFarlane, Stirling Council. Participants discussed their initial reactions to the Plan and considered opportunities for youth workers to get involved and the support that will be needed.

6.4.4 ‘Learning in a changing climate’: a Peruvian-Scottish exchange

In May, a workshop was organised to build on outputs from education for sustainable development (ESD) collaborations between Scotland and Peru and the Erasmus+ ESD SuperVision 4.0 project with partners from across Europe. Participants from across a wide range of organisations contributed to this in-person, bi-lingual intercultural exchange workshop and networking lunch with educators from Peru and Scotland. The event also included opportunities for exchange and dialogue about appropriate curricula and pedagogies in response to the global and local climate and nature crises we face. Comments following the workshop included: *“It’s good to work with people from diverse backgrounds. We can all learn from each other and this workshop was a good example of this”; “There are similarities between experiences and agendas in Scotland and Peru – such as attempts to achieve tangible measures of learning and understanding and competencies, but there are also shared challenges, such as the capacity to measure competencies, outcomes and impacts; and how to balance measurement and flexibility of delivery. In Scotland and the wider UK, the methodologies we use to measure learning can often dictate what is taught and how this is done, rather than what needs to be learned.”*

6.5 YOUTH CO-ORDINATORS

6.5.1 In 2017, the Global RCE Network asked all RCEs to nominate a Youth Co-ordinator to help engage "youth" with the RCE network. In this context, “youth” is defined as being anyone under the age of 35 or working with those under 35. Through this, we aim is to increase Learning for Sustainability Scotland’s engagement with students and young professionals with an interest in teaching and learning about sustainability, through development of a Youth Network. We are currently seeking a new Co-ordinator for Scotland's RCE.

6.5.2 Regular contact was maintained with Students Organising for Sustainability (SOS)-UK, Sparqs and EAUC Scotland to ensure co-ordinated support for students' sustainability action in Scotland. This included the formal partnership with University of St Andrews and others on the [QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project on ESD](#).

6.6 COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

6.6.1 Learning for a Sustainable Future Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

LfS Scotland, in partnership with The University of Edinburgh and funded by the University and The British Council, developed and facilitated three 'massive open access online' courses in 2023. The five-week [Learning for a Sustainable Future](#) course, led by Dr Beth Christie, focused on personal reflection, local and global contexts, online community building, and action within individual 'spheres of influence'. This was offered in March 2023 (hosted on FutureLearn) and a revised version ran in October 2023 on Coursera; which, together have attracted over 12,000 participants from across the globe. The course will be offered again in Spring 2024 on Coursera.

Following on from this course, [Learning for a Sustainable Future: Live at COP 28](#) was hosted on Coursera. The course offered participants from all over the world an opportunity to examine what the UN Climate Change Conference in Dubai, United Arab Emirates was, why it was important, and consider how to support the co-ordinated aims and ambitions of the Conference through action. 'Live' insights into COP28 included those from Scotland's Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity Lorna Slater MSP, UNESCO Greening Education Partnership Team Leader Won Jung Byun, and African RCE Regional Youth Coordinator, Evance Ouya. More than 10,000 participants took part in the course over the two weeks of the conference and the material is still available as a legacy resource.

6.6.2 COP28 Climate Simulation Negotiation

In advance of the UN Climate Conference COP28, Learning for Sustainability Scotland, in partnership with the University of Edinburgh, welcomed eighty students from nine secondary schools in the City of Edinburgh, West Lothian and East Ayrshire to take part in the [British Council's COP28 Climate Simulation Negotiation event](#). Students from an international school in Egypt joined in online. Role-playing as politicians, journalists, and lobbyists, students had the opportunity to find out what it's really like to negotiate a climate deal.

Delegates heard from Lucia Ramon Mateo: Learning for Sustainability lead at Scottish Government, and were supported in negotiations by Pete Higgins, Director LfS Scotland and Dave Reay, Professor of Carbon Management at the University of Edinburgh.

This was the first time the event had come to Scotland and was the first in a series of similar events coordinated by the British Council in five cities across the UK and in UAE. The event was featured on STV News and video footage and interviews with students, teaching staff and organisers were incorporated into the December COP28 MOOC (see 6.6.1).

British Council grant support was also provided to enable LfS Scotland (Sophie Coats, Betsy King, Kirsten Leask) to create a **Climate Pledge and Action Pack** designed to support participating students to take action on sustainability individually and within their school community beyond the event.

6.6.3 GTC Scotland Learning for Sustainability Hub

During 2023, LfS Scotland continued to work with GTCS Scotland to develop an ongoing national [Learning for Sustainability Hub](#), based on the GTC Scotland website, to catalyse the engagement of teachers in early years, primary, secondary, ASN and college settings with LfS in the GTCS Professional Standards at every stage of their careers.

The Hub aims to be an open, interactive, user-friendly ‘one-stop-shop’ that inspires teachers to ‘Explore, Engage, Enact and Embed and Connect’ with LfS as a key aspect of what it means to be a teacher in Scotland. During the year, successful ‘live’ monthly ‘Connect’ sessions were organised with inputs from inspirational professionals; complemented by an interactive map-based platform for practitioners to share their practice and interact with one another on an ongoing basis. Developments are supported by a cross-sectoral practitioner focus group.

6.6.4 Erasmus+ KA2 - Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices

ESD SuperVision 4.0 (September 2020-2023)

Since 2020, LfS Scotland/University of Edinburgh has participated in the Erasmus+ partnership project led by the University of Vechta, Germany and working with RCE Oldenburger Munsterland (Germany); three secondary schools (Germany, Romania, Latvia); Casa Carpului Didactic Damborita (ITE institution Romania); Daugavpils University (Latvia); Italian Association of Sustainability Science (Italy); Vytauto Didziojo University (Lithuania); and Karlova University (Czechia). The project’s focus was implementation of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into school curricula through: 1) Capacity building for teachers and educators; 2) School development as a whole-institution approach and; 3) Policy making in relation to ESD in secondary schools. In 2023, LfS Scotland (Betsy King, Kirsten Leask) participated in knowledge exchange events in Latvia, Lithuania and Czechia. An ESD Framework for secondary schools has been produced by the project, in addition to a teacher education handbook and policy guidelines.

6.6.5 QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project

In 2023, the partnership Monitoring and Evaluating Education for Sustainable Development in Higher education project with the Universities of St Andrews and Edinburgh, SOS-UK, SPARQS and EAUC Scotland was completed. The project, funded by the UK Quality Assurance Association for Higher Education (QAA), has produced adaptable resources that can support effective monitoring and evaluation of ESD at department, faculty and institutional level; using both quantitative measures and reflective approaches that strengthen the learning experience. This includes a published [Monitoring and Evaluation ESD in Higher Education Handbook](#) which outlines and exemplifies a flexible 6-step Framework that provides guidance on monitoring and evaluating ESD in higher education – including looking at mapping, quality, depth, and impacts.

6.6.6 STEM and LfS professional learning

In partnership with Dumfries and Galloway Council and North Ayrshire Council, LfS Scotland developed and successfully delivered a ‘*Bringing the STEM Curriculum to Life: Learning for a Sustainable World*’ four-module course for 60 educators from October 2022-February 2023. This course was funded by Education Scotland and Scottish Government to support the STEM Education and Training Strategy. In Phase 2, the course has been offered to educators from Councils in the South East and South West Education Improvement Collaboratives. This professional learning, which runs from October 2023 - February 2024, aims to support

teachers and early years practitioners to weave together STEM, Learning for Sustainability and Developing the Young Workforce activity across their practice and the wider life of their learning communities.

6.7 POLICY ENGAGEMENT

LfS Scotland's Secretariat maintained formal and informal dialogue with a wide range of individuals from Scottish Government (members and officials) and its agencies during the year.

During 2023, LfS Scotland responded to consultations through its Secretariat, Action Groups, and Steering Group members. Responses were submitted on behalf of members to:

- [National Discussion on Education](#) (December 2022)
- [Review of Qualifications and Assessment](#) (Hayward Review) (January 2023)
- [National Performance Framework Review](#) (June 2023)
- [Consultation on the provisions of the Education Bill](#) (December 2023)

In May, LfS Scotland collaborated with the Scottish Government to provide an online opportunity for members to hear more about and be part of the consultation on the blueprint for Scotland – Scotland's [National Performance Framework](#) and its eleven National Outcomes. Members contributed views about whether the Framework and Outcomes reflects the kind of Scotland we want to see, and how the Framework could have a bigger impact. The results contributed to LfS Scotland's response to the consultation.

During 2023, LfS Scotland continued to participate in Scottish Government workshops to review and refresh the 2019 Learning for Sustainability Action Plan for the Government's Implementation Group [Vision 2030+ Report](#), as a member of the Learning for Sustainability Policy and Stakeholders network. As a member of the Scottish Government's LfS Leadership Group, LfS Scotland contributed to the refreshed LfS Action Plan 2023-2030 [Target 2030: A movement for people, planet and prosperity](#). The plan was launched in June 2023, and the LfS Leadership group will monitor and evaluate its implementation.

In 2022 and early 2023, LfS Scotland participated in the General Teaching Council for Scotland Working Party to revisit the Teacher Code of Professionalism and Conduct (COPAC), contributing to round-table discussions. This included collaborating with Dr Beth Christie, University of Edinburgh, to develop a 'provocation' titled '[Learning for Unsustainability?](#)'; exploring the relationship between Learning for Sustainability, ethics and professionalism.

In November 2023, LfS Scotland collaborated with GTC Scotland to give educators an online opportunity, during a monthly 'Connect' session, to respond to the review of the GTC Scotland 2019 [Memorandum on Entry Requirements to Initial Teacher Education](#), from a Learning for Sustainability perspective.

LfS Scotland continues to participate in [Scotland's Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) Network](#) development through LfS Scotland's Chair Rehema White. This coalition on sustainable development is open to all.

6.8 INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING

LfS Scotland is Scotland’s United Nations University-recognized Regional Centre of Expertise in ESD and one of the global network of 190 RCEs (December 2023). Betsy King was re-appointed as the RCE Regional Advisor for Europe to advise RCEs in the region and to review new RCE applications.

During 2023, there was regular contact with the Global RCE Network and European RCEs. We carried out the following international knowledge exchange activities:

6.8.1 European RCEs.

LfS Scotland provided support for the three-day European RCEs meeting hosted by RCE Fryslân and RCE Basque Country – Navarre. This event was held online in September 2023 on the [theme ‘Transformative Education for Sustainable Regions’](#). In Dialogue and Co-creation’ sessions, Kirsten Leask presented Scotland’s refreshed Learning for Sustainability (LfS) Action Plan and shared ideas on creating a ‘Movement for Change; Steering Group member Eirini Gallou (University of Strathclyde), posed the question “How do the different levels of teaching practitioners share knowledge with each other, and what can RCEs collaboratively do in facilitating this?” and LfS Scotland Chair Rehema White (University of St Andrews) posed the question “How do we know that what we are doing is working and that our attempts on ESD are going beyond just providing information?”.

6.8.2 13th Global RCE Conference

LfS Scotland hosted the 12th Global RCE Conference [online](#) in 2021. In November 2023, Betsy King ‘passed the torch’ to RCE Greater Gombak and RCE Greater Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, joint hosts of the 13th Global RCE Conference, under the theme [‘Whole Community Approach for ESD’](#). Addressing the five Priority Action Areas of UNESCO’s ESD for 2030, the hybrid event was held at the International Islamic University and the UCSI University in Kuala Lumpur. The ambitions of Scotland’s refreshed Learning for Sustainability Action Plan 2023-30 were shared as a panel member of the ‘Capacity Building for the Whole Community Approach’ panel discussion. Thinking and learning on the Monitoring and Evaluating ESD in Higher Education partnership project (see 6.6.6) led by LfS Scotland Chair, Rehema White, was also shared.

6.8.3 18th Meeting - Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the RCEs

As RCE Regional Advisor for Europe, Betsy King participated in the meeting of the Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the RCEs held on the day before the Global RCE Conference in Kuala Lumpur. Agenda items included facilitating youth involvement in RCEs and future strategy and plans in line with the Roadmap for the RCE Community 2021-2030 Strategic Priority Areas.



6.8.3 Greening Education Partnership

During 2023, LfS Scotland participated as a stakeholder in the UNESCO Greening Education Partnership; ‘a dynamic coalition striving to expedite climate change education through coordinated efforts, knowledge management, advocacy, and collaborative endeavours’. This international partnership has garnered the support of over 80 Member States and 1,100 stakeholders, all working in unison to promote environmental initiatives within educational systems, curricula, teacher training, and local communities. It was one of the six ‘Calls to Action’ launched at the UN [Transforming Education Summit](#) in 2022.

6.8.4 International Climate Conference COP28 December 2023

The Learning for a Sustainable Future: Live at COP28 MOOC (see 6.6.1) provided an opportunity to highlight Scotland’s and the global network of RCE’s focus on Learning for Sustainability; with contributions from the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity Lorna Slater MSP, Scotland’s secondary schools Climate Negotiations event (see 6.6.2), Dr Jongwi Park, Head of Innovation and Education, UNU-IAS, and Evance Ouya, Africa RCE Regional Youth Coordinator as well as University of Edinburgh delegates. COP28 featured a Youth, Children, Education and Skills Day, including a high-level dialogue bringing together representatives of UN member states alongside youth, civil society, teachers, and international organizations. [The Declaration on the Common Agenda for Education and Climate Change](#) was endorsed, signalling commitment to pledging targeted action to adapt, mitigate, and invest in education.

6.9 PARTNERSHIPS

In line with the partnership focus of the SDGs and our status as a network organisation with many active members, we continue to seek to strengthen our partnership working. We organised and ran events in partnership, and have developed stronger links with other organisations nationally and internationally.

Examples include working with:

- Tertiary education sector leading organisations; such as GTC Scotland, EAUC Scotland, Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (sparqs), and the College Development Network;
- NGOs supporting education or other aspects of sustainability; such as the National Network of Outdoor Learning, Cairngorms National Park Authority, SSERC, International Development Education Association for Scotland and YouthLink Scotland;
- Schools and teacher education organisations such as Education Scotland, the Regional Improvement Collaboratives, GTC Scotland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, the Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework, Educational Institute for Scotland and several local authorities;
- UK-level groups and organisations such as The British Council, TEESNet, SOS-UK and the Our Shared World coalition;
- International partners such as UNESCO ESD-Net and our Erasmus+ partners (see 6.6.4 and 6.6.5);
- University of Edinburgh’s international programmes;
- Community groups and organisations such as Greener Kirkcaldy and Earth in Common;
- National and local government departments and organisations such as Sustainable Scotland Network.

6.10 ACTION GROUPS

Prior to 2023, LfS Scotland's 'Task Groups' operated 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. In 2023, the Steering Group developed a new, wider 'Action Group' approach to involving members which will be promoted in 2024. This new structure will include:

- **Task Groups:** Member-led groups with a focus on specific time-bound tasks with defined purposes, outputs and resources required.
- **Interest Groups:** Member-led, topic or sector-focused groups with defined purposes, but without defined outputs or resources required.
- **Operational Groups:** Ongoing internal Secretariat and Steering Group-led groups.

6.10.1 Curating Heritage for Sustainable Communities Task Group (Convenor: Ullrich Kockel)

The primary objective of the group is to develop a framework for sustainable heritage-based activity; especially in vulnerable ecological settings. Previous activity has included an appraisal of the maritime heritage of the Northern Isles as a cultural resource for sustainable community development, and care for that resource. Members included Shetland Museums & Archives, Orkney Museum, Heriot-Watt University and various community groups. The project was very successful and opened up new perspectives on sustainable development of community co-curated heritage. This has involved a "New Connections across the Northern Isles" exhibition in Orkney and Shetland and a Virtual Museum.

New collaborations with colleagues from University of Western Ontario, Canada and representatives of indigenous/traditional communities in Turtle Island, Scotland and New Zealand are also being explored and will be taken forward in 2024.

6.10.2 Further and Higher Education Interest Group (Convenors: Christine Calder, Scott Strachan, Rehema White)

This is an ongoing networking group co-badged as one of EAUC's Topic Support Networks to explore and share best practice in learning for sustainability within further and higher education settings, curricula and research practices and develop resources to support teaching and research staff to embed sustainability in their practice. Further and Higher Education groups plan both separate and joint meetings; attended by representatives from universities and colleges around Scotland, depending on the focus of the meeting. Three online events were held in 2023.

6.10.3 Community and SDGs Interest Group (Convenors: Rehema White and Laura Curtis-Moss)

Efforts in this area have focused primarily on contributions to the formal establishment of Scotland's SDG Network. Changes in personnel continued to delay progress of the network in 2023.

6.10.2 LfS Scotland Operational Groups

In 2023, the Communications, Monitoring and Evaluation and Policy Operational Groups held regular action-orientated meetings involving Steering Group and secretariat members. These will be further developed in 2024.

6.11 CONSULTANCY ACTIVITIES

Members of the LfS Scotland Secretariat and associates carried out the following consultancy activities, in order to support the wider core work of LfS Scotland.

6.11.1 LfS Scotland (Kirsten Leask, Betsy King, Jenny Haggarty) was engaged by University of Edinburgh to deliver an 8-week long (April/June 2023) [Sustainability and Social Responsibility International Foundation Programme](#) for 19 international students. This programme will be delivered again in 2024.

6.11.2 LfS Scotland (Rehema White, Betsy King, Kirsten Leask, Pete Higgins) was commissioned by the Ministry of the Environment in Japan to provide a report on the status of and lessons learned from non-formal and informal environmental education in the UK. This formed part of a comparative analysis across five countries.

6.11.3 LfS Scotland (Kirsten Leask, Betsy King) were engaged (August 2022- June 2023) by Highland One World to work with them on aspects of the developmental visioning and action planning phase of the Heritage Horizons Cairngorm 2030 Climate Learning and Education project. The overall [Cairngorms 2030: Heritage Horizons](#) project includes 24 projects that aim to bring about transformational change in the Cairngorms, benefitting people's health and wellbeing, taking action on climate change and enhancing nature across the National Park.

6.12 PUBLICATIONS

We have produced various resources and papers to support our activities and facilitate our members over the year. These include:

White RM, Kockel U, King B, Leask K, Higgins P, and Samuel A (2023) The future starts in the past: embedding learning for sustainability through culture and community in Scotland. *Front. Sustain.* 4:1128620. doi: 10.3389/frsus.2023.1128620

Dlouhá J, White RM, Petry R, Reeves A and Lozano R (2023) Editorial: The role of the human dimension in promoting education for sustainable development at the regional level. *Front. Sustain.* 4:1281269. doi: 10.3389/frsus.2023.1281269

Scoles, J., Boyd, S., Cross, A., Higgins, P., Tauritz, R., & McCune, V. (2023). Academic identities and teaching wicked problems: How to 'shoot a fog' in a complex landscape. *Higher Education Research & Development*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2023.2215181>

Hoare, G. K, Leneuyia, K. L, Higgins, P. & Smith, H. (2023). Wildlife and indigenous communities in Kenya: the influence of conservation education in achieving co-existence. *South African Journal of Environmental Education*, 38(2).

Beames, S., Higgins, P., Nicol, H. & Smith, H. (2023). *Outdoor Learning Across the Curriculum*. Routledge: London & New York. 187pp.

6.13 REPRESENTATION ON NATIONAL and INTERNATIONAL GROUPS

Secretariat or Steering Group members represented LfS Scotland on the following groups:

- **Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the RCEs** as Regional Adviser to the RCE Community (Europe) (from January 2020)
- **Scottish Government Learning for Sustainability Leadership Group** member (2022 – ongoing)
- **Scottish Government Learning for Sustainability Policy and Stakeholder Network** member (June 2019- ongoing)
- **Scotland SDG Network** Steering Group member (December 2020 - ongoing)
- **Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan (CESAP) Education Sub Group** member (September 2022 and ongoing)
- **Department for Education International Green Skills Conference Steering Group** member (to September 2023)
- **SCQF Credit Rating Project Steering Group** member (April 2022 and ongoing)
- **Teacher Education for Equity and Environmental Sustainability Network (TEESNet)** Steering Group member and Scotland representative
- **GTC Scotland COPAC Working Group** (from April 2022 – March 2023)
- **GTC Scotland ITE Working Group** (from January 2023 – ongoing)
- **Education Scotland LfS Partner Forum** (member from June 2021)
- **Education Scotland Rights and Participation Network** (member from 2022)
- **College Development Network Awards** Judge (August 2023)
- **Green Gown Awards** Judge (2023)
- **National Network of Outdoor Learning** member (November 2019 and ongoing)
- **Blue-Action Societal engagement group** member (2019 and ongoing)
- **China Nature Education Network** expert adviser (2019- ongoing)
- **Scottish Government** - Scottish Biodiversity Programme Stakeholder Engagement Group (member September 2020 and ongoing)
- **St Andrews Prize for the Environment Steering Committee** (ongoing)
- **Royal Society of Edinburgh Education Committee** - member
- **Field Studies Council** - Board Member and Chair (July 2020 - ongoing)
- **NatureScot** (Scottish Government nature agency) - Board Member, Chair of Scientific Advisory Committee (June 2021 - ongoing)
- **Joint Nature Conservation Committee** (UK) - Member (November 2022 - ongoing)
- **Island Schools Regional Stakeholder Group** – Panel Member (December 2022 – ongoing)
- **Local authority Learning for Sustainability network/advisory groups (Dumfries & Galloway, City of Edinburgh, Fife, West Lothian)** – members (2019/2023/2022/2020 – ongoing)
- **UNESCO Greening Education Partnership** member (2023 ongoing)
- **Proposed Outdoor Education (Scotland) Bill** - member of Advisory Group (2022 - ongoing)

6.14 AWARDS

6.14.1 LfS Scotland and partners received award success in the [2023 Regional Centres of Expertise in Education \(RCE\) Awards for Innovative Projects on Education for Sustainable Development \(ESD\)](#). These awards are presented annually to RCEs that have made outstanding contributions to address local sustainable development challenges in their regions.

Our ongoing partnership with the General Teaching Council for Scotland on the national '**Learning for Sustainability Hub**' received an 'Outstanding Flagship Project' award. The Hub provides freely-available resources, self-evaluation tools, professional learning, professional reading, curated resources, and regular opportunities for educators to connect and network with each other.

The **Monitoring and Evaluating ESD in Higher Education** partnership project led by Rehema White and involving the University of Edinburgh, EAUC Scotland, Students Organising for Sustainability UK (SOS-UK), Sparqs (Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland) and funders UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, received an ‘Outstanding Flagship Project’ award.

The special issue of the peer-reviewed Frontiers’ journal ‘**The Role of the Human Dimension in Promoting Education for Sustainable Development at the Regional Level**’, coordinated by RCE Czechia, and featuring our contributions to the editorial and an article entitled: ‘The future starts in the past: embedding learning for sustainability through culture and community in Scotland’, received an Honourable Recognition Award.

6.14.2 In 2023 Pete Higgins was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, for contributions to education and sustainability.

7. NEXT STEPS

The Strategic Plan for LfS Scotland in 2020-2025 has been developed in the context of the [UNESCO Plan for ESD to 2030](#) and Global [Roadmap for the RCE Community 2021-30](#).

Priority activities are:

1. We weave connections across sectors within Scotland and with our international partners
1.1 Increase engagement in LfS in Scotland across all sectors
1.2 Share knowledge, achievements and opportunities for members
1.3 Organise and co-host events for members, within and across sectors
1.4 Coordinate task groups to address issues of concern and interest for our members
1.5 Share our learning with others across the UN RCE Network
2. We co-produce, pioneer and practise new knowledge and approaches and curate materials and resources with and for educators, organisations and communities
2.1 Play a leading role in debating, enabling and monitoring the UN SDGs in Scotland and beyond (especially but not exclusively SDG 4.7)
2.2 Contribute to the conceptualisation as well as the practice in this field
2.3 Develop and facilitate professional development for educators
3. We advocate and provide strategic advice for effective learning for sustainability policy
3.1 Lead on and contribute to policy debates in Scotland, UK and internationally
3.2 Provide advice to practitioners, policy and decision makers
3.3 Lead and contribute to expert groups to address LfS issues

3.4 Work with local authorities and Regional Improvement Collaboratives for progress across Scotland in sustainability capacities
4. We lead, monitor, and evaluate projects and programmes locally and internationally, often in partnership
4.1 Pursue the implementation of LfS in the school sector, including teacher education at all stages
4.2 Support learning in communities and the Third Sector
4.3 Engage with the Further Education and Higher Education sectors to integrate and embed LfS
4.4 Undertake consultancy projects to progress LfS

8. MEMBERS' VOICES

We seek to inspire and inform members, to connect members and to work in partnership with members. We are driven by external policy and highlighted imperatives for LfS but we wish to respond to members' needs. We are always willing to hear new ideas or requests for Action Groups, communication, or events. Please get in touch if you have any suggestions or if you wish to partner in a new venture.

In December 2023, we launched a [Members' Survey](#) to seek views on LfS Scotland's activities, and this will close in January 2024. Any feedback, ideas or suggestions you may have are warmly welcomed and key findings will be used to inform our 2024/25 Work Plan.

9. FINAL WORD

2023 marks the end of a decade of activity by Learning for Sustainability Scotland. Few RCEs globally have successfully maintained such a breadth of engagement across different sectors (School, Higher and Further Education, Community, NGOs, Government) and at such a range of scales (individual, institution, community, organisation, local authority, national, international) for such a period of time. We have supported learning, conversations and critical analysis of learning in all of these areas. It has been invigorating and rewarding to be part of this. Our successes have been due to a dedicated group of core staff, great partnerships, supporting Steering Group members, membership and organisations and a culture for education that is rooted deep in the history and context of Scotland. We will be celebrating these achievements in January 2024 at our AGM and Gathering then a formal evening event.

Whilst we are proud of the past year and the past decade, there remain many challenges ahead, including the deepening nature and climate crises, widening social inequalities, misinformation adoption and over-marketisation of education. Together with our members and partner organisations, we will continue to tackle these and other issues, supporting learners in all sectors to acquire the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to create a sustainable future. Next year, we will be focusing on catalysing the movement for change in Scotland, encouraging reflection on our relationships with nature and deepening critical engagement with learning for sustainability, especially in universities.

Learning for Sustainability Scotland, December 2023

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