

# Young people and the Sustainable Development Goals

Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> November – Friday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2017

REPORT





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## 1. Introduction

This 24-hour consultation (30 November to 1 December 2017) was convened at St George's House, situated within Windsor Castle, as part of the regular programme of consultations organised on matters of public interest, inviting key representatives to spend 24 hours together to discuss, debate and reflect on the subject in hand and identify recommendations to improve or develop the situation.

### 1.1 The Sustainable Development Goals

2015 saw the Paris Agreement<sup>1</sup> and the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs aka, the Global Goals). The focus of the SDGs is transforming people's lives, and they apply to everyone in the world. They have the potential to focus attention on how to address and resolve some of the huge range of problems the world faces today. However support for the SDGs is not universal with some feeling that a particular form of economic development is built into them (i.e. global capitalism with a neo-liberal orientation). Others question how well the goals map onto how we think about sustainability and some have reservations about particular goals. Finally some also think that there are too many targets with many of these being poorly expressed.

**Figure 1 | The Sustainable Development Goals**



In terms of implementation in the UK, action is required to:

- Deliver the SDGs for all UK citizens
- Ensure the Department for International Development (DfID) supports the delivery of the SDGs in its priority countries
- Ensure that domestic action on the SDGs has a positive global impact.

Although international aid and development-focused trade will play a hugely important role in realising the SDGs, education across the world will have an equally important role, and a disproportionately important one in economically-developed countries such as the UK. In this, there seems to be a symbiotic relationship between learning and the SDGs which is illustrated by the following propositions:

1. Goal-related learning by students can help increase the likelihood that the goals will be valued, supported and hence realised

<sup>1</sup> [http://unfccc.int/paris\\_agreement/items/9485.php](http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9485.php)

2. A critical study of the goals can enhance the focus, and help raise the quality, of student learning

Every UK school has an opportunity for its teaching and wider activities to cover a range of the SDGs, and working in partnership with community groups has the capability to bring teachers, students, leaders and external actors together. Many such groups are also already active in their own right working with young people and others in community settings to help raise awareness and understanding of the SDGs and to bring about change. In this sense, the SDGs offer a currency and a means of exchange that all can understand and get involved in using approaches that make sense to them.

### 1.2 Consultation Purposes

Although there is a temptation to see school-age young people as merely preparing for further study, they are already consumers and citizens who make ethical and other judgements on a daily basis, and who have beliefs and values. There is, therefore, a responsibility on those working with young people to ensure that they are helped to contribute to a more just and sustainable future. None of this is an argument for a study of the SDGs, *per se*, as some new curriculum area or subject. Rather, it's a case for seizing the opportunities that present themselves to focus on the SDGs during formal and informal education, both within institutions and in the community, working across ideas and disciplines where sensible, and with appropriate partners whenever possible. It is this that the consultation explored with these purposes in mind:

1. To examine and test the propositions set out above in order to identify appropriate educational approaches and opportunities
2. To bring key stakeholders together in a way that encourages exchange and mutual comprehension so that the significance of the SDGs to the work of the UK's education sectors (and vice versa) can be better understood.

## 2. Exploring the SDGS with young people: Current activities

For the SDGs to be successful, young people (and, arguably, all citizens) must be provided with:

- participatory, creative and transformative learning experiences which enable them to understand the challenges, complexities, injustices, interdependencies of our world through addressing topics such as climate change and poverty
- the opportunity to explore and understand the opportunities, connections, common aspirations and common humanity within our world
- an education which provides them with the opportunity to develop the essential skills, attitudes and dispositions that will enable and empower them as active citizens contributing to the achievement of the SDGs and thus a fair and sustainable world through their own choices, behaviours and actions.

Although universal and collaborative, the SDGs themselves are not perfect. It is important, for example, to ensure that actions taken to address the SDGs use social justice rather than charity-based approaches. Therefore, we must equip young people with the skills to think critically about the goals themselves and about whether they truly address the root causes of poverty, inequality and climate change, and to understand how to influence and effect change locally and globally.

### 2.1 Policy context across the UK nations

Given the significance of the SDGs, it seems obvious that schools should focus on them, and it is no surprise that many already do. However, how straightforward it is to focus on the SDGs varies across jurisdictions. For example, in Wales (with Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship), in Northern Ireland (with learning

areas such as the *World Around Us* and *Local and Global Citizenship*), and in Scotland (with curriculum for excellence and learning for sustainability), there is more central mandating of SDG-related work. In England, by contrast, the Department for Education has left DfID (with Pearson, Oxfam, and others) to support this work through its Global Learning Programme, with schools being free to make a distinctive contribution if they so choose.

The policy context and current activities enabling exploration of the SDGs with young people across all four UK nations was considered during the consultation and is described in the tables overleaf.

## Discussions

The following key points were raised during the discussions following these presentations.

- If we are to consider the full remit of the SDGs, it is important to look beyond the government department and agencies responsible for education. Given the holistic nature of the goals, there is a role for most if not all departments.
- One area fundamental to exploration of the SDGs with young people is the development of agency – both in generating solutions to the challenges within each goal, but also in holding Governments to account for their achievement.
- For this to develop, teachers must first develop a sense of agency themselves, and also a licence to be enablers of agency. This could be an important role for NGOs to play outside the formal education system, as, inside the impact can be limited by the curriculum and results-driven nature of the current system.
- These points bring in questions over the broader purpose of education. Although the SDGs provide a frame of reference to think about education in a different way, the starting point must be young people as learners and their place in the world, rather than the achievement of goals.
- The process of creating education policy was also called into question, with suggestions that policy and ways for engaging with the SDGs within educational settings should be created by educators themselves, rather than being Government/politically-led.

	Examples of current activities
<p data-bbox="98 735 125 818" style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"><b>Wales</b></p> <p data-bbox="174 225 1021 280"><b>Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) Strategy – 2008</b></p> <p data-bbox="174 280 1137 603">The strategy aims to deliver education that prepares students for “their lives in the 21st century and their role as global citizens”. It proposes an embedded approach to teaching and learning about ESDGC with seven themes at each key stage of education which link closely to multiple SDGs. Implementation of the strategy is supported by two key programmes, both DfID funded. These are the Global Learning Programme – Wales (GLP-W) is working with over 40% of schools in Wales and implemented by a consortium led by the Education Development Trust and Connecting Classrooms implemented by the British Council. In 2010, Estyn (the Welsh Government’s school inspectorate) made it a requirement for all school inspection reports to comment on ESDGC and provided guidance for inspectors.</p> <p data-bbox="174 635 461 659"><b>Welsh Baccalaureate</b></p> <p data-bbox="174 663 1137 778">This requires the development of skills including a compulsory global citizenship challenge at every level, as well as the global competences to be assessed through the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) from 2018.</p> <p data-bbox="174 810 327 834"><b>Curriculum</b></p> <p data-bbox="174 839 1137 954">A new curriculum is also under development, with one of the four purposes of this being to help learners to develop as ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world. This will be finalised in January 2019 and will be used throughout Wales by 2022.</p> <p data-bbox="174 986 898 1010"><b>Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015)</b></p> <p data-bbox="174 1015 1137 1129">The Act aims to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales and requires public bodies to make decisions in a sustainable way and make progress towards seven well-being goals including developing a globally-responsible Wales. Goal 4 of the Act is “a globally responsible Wales”.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1160 225 2119 339">- Ensuring a range of schools (urban, rural, large and small, Welsh and English-medium) participate in global learning with access to resources in Welsh and English so that global learning is embedded across the whole education system.</li> <li data-bbox="1160 379 2119 563">- There are close working relationships between Welsh Government departments, Estyn and Education Consortia that are influencing the new Curriculum for Wales including training by GLP-W for 16 representatives from Curriculum Pioneer Schools at the request of Welsh Government in practical examples to illustrate their draft definitions of Welsh dimension and International Perspectives.</li> <li data-bbox="1160 603 2119 659">- There is a range of providers of global learning in Wales, many of whom are members of Wales Alliance for Global Learning.</li> <li data-bbox="1160 691 2119 978">- GLP-W responded to the refugee and migrant crisis and subsequent rise in reported hate crime by developing a one-day Safe Havens training workshop. 210 participants including heads, teachers, consortia challenge advisers, local authority directors of education and advisers, Local Authority English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Healthy School coordinators have attended Safe Havens conferences held in Cardiff, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Conwy and the Vale of Glamorgan during 2016 and 2017. These events were held in partnership with the local authorities concerned and our approved provider, Show Racism the Red Card, and helped to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1249 1018 2119 1074">• improve teachers’ understanding of the refugee crisis including media bias in reporting,</li> <li data-bbox="1249 1082 2119 1137">• inspire teachers to integrate teaching and learning about this issue into the curriculum</li> <li data-bbox="1249 1145 2119 1201">• enable schools to combat prejudice following an increase in reported hate crime.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p data-bbox="1205 1241 2119 1297">97% of teachers reported being very satisfied or satisfied with the training.</p>

<p><b>Scotland</b></p>	<p><b>International development</b>                  The Scottish Government has a ministerial remit and budget for International Development including a Climate Justice Fund. Initial work on the Goals has come under this remit.</p> <p><b>National Performance Framework</b>                  The SDGs, as well as the <i>Scottish National Action Plan for Human Rights</i> (SNAP) and the <i>Fairer Scotland Action Plan</i> have been mapped onto the Government's overall National Performance Framework. The mapping of the SDGs to date addresses only high-level outcomes and has not as yet progressed to more detailed actions. A key current advocacy goal among civil society actors is the establishment of a cross-departmental structure within Government to drive engagement with the SDGs. This ties in with previous work on Policy Coherence for Development.</p> <p><b>Curriculum for Excellence</b>                  The policy context for global citizenship education (GCE), and for the SDGs by implication, is strong. GCE is integrated across Curriculum for Excellence (the national curricular guidance) as a cross-cutting theme and Scottish Government contributes to the core funding of the six Scottish Development Education Centres (DECs).</p> <p><b>Learning for Sustainability</b>                  Learning for Sustainability (LfS), which encompasses GCE, Sustainable Development Education and Outdoor Learning, was made an entitlement for all pupils in 2013 and is embedded across the General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS) professional standards. This context has appeared less secure in the past couple of years in part as a consequence of a politicisation of education, which was previously relatively consensus-driven, and in part through PISA results driving a literacy and numeracy focus. Scottish Government has recently recommitted to the LfS entitlement but further work is needed to ensure that this filters back to schools.</p>	<p><b>IDEAS network</b>                  IDEAS is a longstanding network around GCE that includes NGOs, DEC's and other local and national third sector groups. IDEAS' <a href="#">Theory of Change</a> highlights four elements of impact with young people: (1) becoming more 'globally minded' (thinking, questioning, reading, discussing, reflecting), (2) making lifestyle choices and other decisions taking into account global social justice issues, (3) taking action on global social justice issues, and (4) having better understanding of levers of power and how to effect change. Achieving these impacts is most often mediated through work with teachers – providing a sustainable context for the development of an underpinning critical understanding. Recent relevant IDEAS programmes include (1) the European Commission (EC) funded <i>Teach Global Ambassadors</i> – in depth, transformative work with relatively small group of secondary teachers (Scotland and Lithuania) who subsequently acted as GCE ambassadors across their schools and Local Authorities; and (2) the DFID-funded <i>Global Learning Programme Scotland</i> (GLP-S) – managed by IDEAS and delivered by the DEC's with Oxfam, Christian Aid and Eco-Schools as key partner organisations. GLP-S has worked strategically through Local Authorities, engaging with 56% of schools. IDEAS and its members are also involved in three new EC-funded consortium projects offering different opportunities for engaging young people with the SDGs: (1) <i>Bridge 47</i> – Building Global Citizenship – developing GCE networks, evidence, advocacy and partnerships at national, EU and global levels; (2) <i>Start the Change!</i> – supporting teachers and young people to explore global interdependencies, the SDGs and their links to migration; and (3) <i>Global Issues – Global Subjects</i> – inclusion of sensitive global issues in secondary schools subject teaching.</p> <p><b>Global Learning Programme Scotland – Youth Citizen Advocates</b>                  A pilot set of SDG-focused 'Youth Citizen Advocates' events are running under GLP-S, engaging directly with young people in the context of the upcoming Scottish 'Year of Young People 2018'. As well as impacting on young people, these events have been designed to give secondary teachers an incentive to engage with both the SDGs and GCE more widely.</p> <p><b>Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)</b>                  SCVO is playing a leading role in this coalition building which also involves networks such as Scotland Malawi Partnership, Scottish International Development Alliance and Learning for Sustainability Scotland and organisations focused on youth participation such as Young Scot, YouthLink, Children in Scotland and Scottish Youth Parliament.</p>
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<p><b>Northern Ireland</b></p>	<p><b>Context</b>                  Given the current political stalemate in the devolved government, there is a lack of mechanisms to hold administrations accountable for the SDGs. The outcomes-based approach of the now defunct programme for government, with its emphasis on well-being, had aligned well with the SDGs and connected them to a global mandate. It could have presented Northern Ireland with the opportunity to integrate the global SDGs into local policy making and help tackle local issues such as increasing levels of poverty, the latter highlighting the global nature of inequality and the importance of the universal nature of the goals. Moreover, the legacy issues of the conflict, the uncertainties of Brexit, the 'border' issue, and with one of the youngest populations in Europe, it is more important than ever in Northern Ireland to raise young people's awareness of the SDGs and their relevance to their lives.</p> <p><b>Curriculum</b>                  The objectives and value statements underpinning the Northern Ireland Curriculum and the requirements of learning areas such as the <i>World Around Us</i> in primary and <i>Local and Global Citizenship</i> in secondary provide opportunities to introduce the SDGs. However, with the focus still on literacy, numeracy and academic attainment, these values and objectives seem to have got lost. When the curriculum was revised in 2007 it did, however, allow schools the flexibility 'to make decisions about how best to interpret and combine minimum requirements so as to...prepare each young person for a rapidly changing world'. Therefore, if school senior leaders and teachers can see the value of educating their young people about the SDGs they will do so.</p>	<p><b>Global Learning Programme</b>                  The Global Learning Programme in Northern Ireland has provided teachers from over 45% of schools with training which has introduced them to the SDGs. It is gathering increasing examples of how schools are teaching the SDGs through the curriculum. Although it promotes the World's Largest Lesson it encourage schools to embed global learning across the school and throughout the school year rather than through a one-off annual event.</p> <p><b>NGO programmes</b>                  Many organisations in Northern Ireland such as the Centre for Global Education, Trócaire and Children in Crossfire have been supporting schools with global learning for many years. Through their education programmes with adults and young people, they go beyond simplistic awareness-raising and help young people to gain a deeper, more meaningful and critical understanding of the world they live in and empower them as agents of change.</p>
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<p><b>England</b></p>	<p><b>Context</b> The Department for International Development (DfID) promotes and funds the Global Learning Programme [GLP] in schools, however it does so without the active collaboration of the Department for Education or Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs which means that there's a risk that some goals can get more curriculum attention than others.</p> <p><b>Curriculum</b> For all its limitations, the curriculum for England does provide numerous opportunities for schools, teachers and students to explore a wide range of the world's most pressing issues in effective ways.</p>	<p><b>Global Learning Programme</b> The Global Learning Programme (GLP) England is a government-funded programme of support that has been helping schools since 2013 to deliver effective teaching and learning about development and global issues at Key Stage 2 and 3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over 7,200 schools in England are now registered for the GLP England.</li> <li>• Over 400 teachers have been trained for their schools to become GLP Expert Centres</li> <li>• Nearly 30,000 teachers have received funded* training through the GLP</li> <li>• Hundreds of CPD courses have been offered to schools in England</li> <li>• The programme has been highlighted positively by Ofsted</li> <li>• Nine reports have been developed through the programme on nine research projects</li> <li>• Hundreds of free online resources are now available</li> <li>• More than 40 case studies and films have been produced on a wide range of topics<sup>2</sup>. A number of GLP schools have been engaging with the SDGs and case studies have been developed<sup>3</sup>.</li> </ul> <p>* The GLP is funded by the UK government. All schools can join the programme, but funding is only available to Key Stages 2 and 3 in state schools in England. The GLP in England (GLP-E) is managed by a consortium of partners: Pearson (lead), Geographical Association, UCL Institute of Education, Oxfam UK, Royal Geographical Society (with IBG), SSAT and Think Global.</p> <p><b>NGO Programmes</b> A broad range of large and small national NGOs such as Oxfam, Think Global, the RSPB, the Geographical Association, Eco-Schools, and the Wildlife Trusts, and by even more local NGOs and Trusts that work with schools and their communities support schools, teachers and students to explore issues associated with the SDGs.</p>
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<sup>2</sup> See [www.glp-e.org.uk](http://www.glp-e.org.uk) for details.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://glp.globaldimension.org.uk/pages/11317>

## 2.2 Experiences of two schools

During the consultation, attendees also heard about the experiences of engaging young people with the SDGs from practitioners based in primary and secondary education.

### **Torriano Primary School, London**

#### *About the school: vision and mission*

Torriano Primary is an inclusive two-form entry school, which is ethnically and socio-economically diverse, in effect a global microcosm. The school seeks to educate their children and community to take first steps in the lifelong process of developing a global outlook. To achieve this, they focus on global competence - a combination of knowledge and understanding, cognitive and socio-emotional skills, values and attitudes.

Opportunities are provided throughout the school curriculum for our community to understand its place in the local, national and global context. Torriano encourages everyone to advocate for both our collective wellbeing and sustainability, demonstrating their learning in a variety of creative forms.

#### *Exploring the SDGs: Curriculum and competencies*

In 2016-17, global learning was evidenced in a curriculum focus on The Global Goals (SDGs), aiming to increase the community's awareness of the aims and objectives and advocate ways to make them a reality. The whole school theme, '*Making Connections, Making Changes*', featured cross-curricular learning activities across the whole curriculum for the whole year. Further projects, including STEAM 2017 have built on the success of this project.

#### *Exploring the SDGs: Partnerships and collaboration*

The school has developed partnerships with a range of cultural and community organisations, businesses and NGOs to design bespoke, interdisciplinary learning experiences, which whenever possible promote global competence. Our commitment to global competence is embedded within whole school themes and community events throughout the academic year. Maintaining a continued commitment to UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Award programme and membership of Ashoka's Changemaker Schools' network strengthen this commitment.

Some have formed as a result of our commitment to careers education as lead participants in Camden's Cultural Commissioning group and Primary Schools Careers Conferences. The school's participation in the London Enterprise Ambassador Scheme has also helped to explore this sector through Founders for Schools and INSPIRE. Class teachers collaborate with partners, their colleagues and the community in a symbiotic way. Initial project teams are created to support classroom colleagues usually comprising senior leaders, subject leaders, a designated governor, the performing arts leader and an artist in residence. These adults work alongside a taskforce of children, who collaborate to co-create project enquiries culminating in creative responses by each year group.

The emphasis on creativity has led to an advisory training role aiding local schools' applications for the Artsmark Award. In recognition of this contribution the school has been asked to apply for the Platinum Artsmark Award. We continue to pursue and strengthen links with international colleagues, NGOs, civil society organisations and academic institutions in the hope of establishing sustainable education as a key element in Initial Teacher Training programmes.

### **Sir John Lawes School, Harpenden**

#### *About the school: vision and mission*

SJL is an 11-19 school that sets out to ensure that every student develops a solid understanding of global issues and the key factors that determine how the world is evolving, so that they go on to become active global citizens who are well-equipped to make a difference. The school is particularly well known for its Sustainable Development

(ESD) work which involves preparation for a lifetime of sustainable living whilst contributing towards sustainable communities and improving the environmental performance of the school. The school received an Outstanding judgement for its ESD work from Ofsted.

#### *Exploring the SDGs: Partnerships and collaboration*

The school runs programmes such as the International Schools Award and Eco Schools and has student groups that focus on active citizenship, for example through links with Oxfam, Eco Schools, and in partnership with schools in Zambia. The school's annual International Enrichment Day involves cross-curricula learning relating to global themes. The school has leadership projects with disadvantaged Year 7 students which take place over a half term and are linked to a global / sustainability theme.

We designed and delivered a joint learning day with UK and Zambian students on the Sustainable Development Goals, and supported the Oxfam Youth Action Group at the school to create a display on the goals featuring examples of Goal-related action by SJL students. We are currently working with student groups to plan activities for SFYOuth Equality Forum that is focused on Goal 5 [Gender Equality] which will be held on International Women's Day next year.

SJL is an expert centre for the Global Learning Programme and CPD is organised and delivered over 4 terms. We also design and deliver CPD courses on sustainability and global learning through the Alban Teaching Schools Alliance. In 2018 we are hosting a CPD day at our school on global learning and sustainability. We established and continue to lead an annual Peace Day event for schools in Harpenden, and lead an annual Sustainable Schools Training Event for KS2 and KS3 that is offered to up to 16 local schools.

The school has a Green Leaders Training Programme for Sixth Formers from 10 local schools. These students are trained to go into local primary schools to deliver assemblies, with around 30 delivered per year. SJL is also involved in Ashden's Less CO<sub>2</sub> Programme working with a cluster of local schools.

SJL's work contributed to a Pearson session on Education and the SDGs at the UKSSD conference in Feb 2017, and we made a presentation to a Sustainable Schools Alliance Board Meeting in April. We delivered a workshop on SDGs – Learning and Action at Global Learning Programme Expert Centre National Conference in October 2017.

#### **Discussion**

The following points were raised during the discussions that followed these presentations:

- The values, culture and individual passions of schools and their teachers makes a difference to the extent to which schools engage with ideas such as the SDGs leading to a huge variety in experiences for learners across different institutions.
- More evidence and conversations – led by young people themselves - are needed around the outcomes for learners of exploring the SDGs – the benefits in terms of attainment, motivation (for teachers also), engagement with communities and social skills. These benefits tie in with existing governmental priorities so communicating them better will be essential to securing support for the agenda.
- The SDGs provide a common topic across all education systems, with the opportunity to find common solutions. In many cases, systems are designed around the achievements of the individual however positive examples for exploring the SDGs see collective learning featuring heavily where students work to achieve something for a common good, and at the same time generate transferable skills.

- Within the current system, Key Stage 3 provides an opportunity for a focus on exploration of the SDGs. Within this age range there is interest in enriching the curriculum prior to beginning GCSEs. Incorporating the SDGs here also provides progression to learners who have engaged with the issues during primary education.

### 2.3 Experiences of NGOs

The consultation also heard case study presentations from three NGOs regarding their experiences of exploring the SDGs with young people and on the role of their sector in doing so. Examples of programmes and projects which explore the SDGs (both directly and indirectly) in formal and informal education settings were presented.

#### **Oxfam GB**

Oxfam's overall vision is to create a just and sustainable world without poverty, so all our work relates closely to sustainable development and the SDGs. The organisation runs a wide range of programmes and projects across a confederation of 19 affiliates working in 92 countries related to specific goals. The overarching themes are Water, Women, Work and Inequality (relating most strongly to SDGs 3, 5, 6, 8, 10) but in tackling these issues the need for the holistic approach advocated by the SDG model is recognised and other programmes relating to other SDGs such as governance (16), climate action (13), and innovation (9) have also been developed. Similarly, all the organisation's work with young people relates to various SDGs in different ways, some more overtly than others.

#### *Example programmes*

Promoting global citizenship for sustainable development (SDG 4.7) is at the heart of Oxfam's domestic education and youth work. The recently revised '*Education for Global Citizenship: a guide for schools*<sup>4</sup>' sets out a popular and well-respected curriculum that outlines progression of learning for young people in the knowledge, understanding, skills, values and attitudes they need to be active global citizens contributing to sustainable development.

The resources produced support a 'Learn, Think, Act' approach to young people's engagement with SDG issues such as clean water and sanitation, poverty, hunger, well-being and climate change. The curriculum-based resources link to SDG themes while also mapping onto English, Scottish and Welsh curricula. '*More or Less Equal*'<sup>5</sup> is one example. Based on the theme of inequality, it is linked to maths, geography and English curricula, and subject associations are confident that appropriate subject knowledge, understanding and skills are being enhanced through using the resource. Learners are encouraged to act in response to their learning, for example by raising awareness within their schools and communities through peer teaching which also supports the development of student voice and other skills that support their longer-term development as active global citizens.

Oxfam have also produced teachers' guides on Maths, English and Science and global citizenship which highlight the benefits of taking a global citizenship education approach to these subjects to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

Two resources that focus specifically on the SDGs have also been produced and have contributed to the *World's Largest Lesson*<sup>6</sup>. The SDGs provide various starting points and teaching ideas for teachers to explore the seven SDG themes with their learners, including critiquing the SDGs and their approach. '*Getting Critical about the post-2015*

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/education-for-global-citizenship-a-guide-for-schools>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/more-or-less-equal-maths>,  
<https://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/more-or-less-equal-english>,  
<https://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/more-or-less-equal-geography>

<sup>6</sup> <http://worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org/>

*Global Goals*<sup>7</sup>, published in 2013 and linked to the DfID Shape the Future competition, enabled young people to examine different views and think critically about the SDGs. Using 'talking heads' videos from experts and written summaries, the resource enables young people to develop key skills such as critical thinking, decision-making, enquiry, analysis and evaluation through De Bono's six thinking hats, diamond ranking and RAG success criteria, and futures thinking.

Looking forward, Oxfam's next *Future Youth School Forum*<sup>8</sup> will focus on SDG 5. The project (2015-18) aims to create a model for school-led global citizenship youth forums and action. We also run a *Girls and ICT* event (SDG 5). In Wales, our *Changemaker* programme, supporting youth partnerships and workshops, focused on the SDGs in 2015. In Scotland, our work as a GLP-S partner has included a focus on the SDGs.

#### *Example campaigns*

As well as formal education programmes, Oxfam's main UK campaigns map onto the SDGs: Inequality (10), Food and Climate Justice (2, 13) and Rights in Crisis (1, 2, 3, 4, 6).

Young people have been involved in various actions to support these campaigns. For example: lobbying the UK government on funding for quality education through the 'Send My Friend to School' (GCE) campaign (SDG 4); writing postcards to local and national government on climate change through 'For the Love of...' (SDG 7); campaigning in support of refugees and asylum seekers through our 'Stand as One' campaign (SDG 16).

### **TheGoals.org**

#### *Background and approach*

Combining education for sustainable development [ESD] and digitalisation to unlock potential and connect a whole generation, TheGoals.org seek turn the first connected generation into the first sustainable generation. Young people are engaged globally in problem-solving, co-creation and sharing of knowledge to speed up the world's path to sustainability.

Behavioural change is needed to achieve the SDGs. As our knowledge is based on 10% from formal education, 20% from interaction, and 70% from experiences, ESD must meet the requirements of combining knowledge and practice. It must reach further than one-way communication. Learning must instead be practised and shared to establish deep learning that will reach the learners' hearts and thus their actions. No problem is so big that it can't be solved piece by piece, no matter how big and overwhelming it might seem at first. By changing learning as usual we believe that we can solve problems brought to us by business as usual.

#### *The method: crowdlearning*

TheGoals.org platform is built to accommodate millions of users and offers ready-to-use, free quality education resources. It is designed to work for even the simplest mobile device, and everyone with access to the internet can get on board. The learning is not restricted by size of the classroom or other learning settings, teacher or leaders availability or even where the learners are geographically spread.

TheGoals.org helps learners to learn more, and more deeply. The courses do not just teach knowledge, the assignments learners have to complete directly take them to interact with their local communities and practise problem-solving. All completed assignments are shared across the platform, to be read by other learners who have

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/getting-critical>

<sup>8</sup> [fys-forums.eu/en](https://fys-forums.eu/en)

completed the same module, and who can then provide feedback. We call this crowdlearning and it serves several purposes:

- learners gain perspectives by reading how other learners tackle the same questions;
- peer rating challenges learners positively and motivate them to improve
- the fact that assignments are shared with learners beyond their classroom, school, and country will attract more learners to take the courses.

Over time, better and better solutions to an increasing number of challenges are collected at TheGoals.org and shared among a growing number of learners. This is how the first connected generation becomes the first sustainable generation.

The 18 courses (one per SDG and an introductory course) are developed collaboratively with contributions from the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network and the Stockholm Resilience Center.

#### *Impact and outcomes*

Besides the immediate impact on attitudes which bring about transformative social change from the grassroots through users and their activities, the platform will generate relevant data and content for other stakeholders, such as governments, UN agencies and NGOs. Data (on the ground information on all 17 SDGs with direct connection to local circumstances) can be extracted and used, for example, to evaluate programming effects and needs. Data can also support storytelling efforts and best practices. Currently over 1500 users are registered with TheGoals.org and more come on board as partners roll out courses to learners. It has been used as part of the ocean literacy and advocacy work of the UN Ocean Conference and, together with the UN Major Group for Children and Youth, we have made a voluntary commitment to scale up ocean literacy efforts.

#### *Global recognition*

The platform and method is internationally recognised as a leader in innovative and transformative ICT-based education. UNESCO highlighted the precursor to the project, the Young Masters Program, as one of four excellent educational initiatives on ESD promoted at the Rio+20 Conference. TheGoals.org is a Key Partner the UNESCO Global Action Programme (GAP) Partner Network, leading priority action area 4: Empowering and mobilising youth.

#### **RSPB**

RSPB probably interacts with around half a million young people each year through various face-to-face activities, self-led resources and membership; through facilitating adults (e.g. parents, carers and teachers) or as individuals, from early years to adulthood. The majority are under 11yrs old. Currently, we do not directly use reference to SDGs in any of this work with children and young people.

Within the RSPB, a mapping exercise has been completed identifying where current activities have 'fit' with the 17 SDGs. Examples include:

- Generating evidence and research on the benefits of connection to nature and also directly engaging young people with nature through programmes such as 'Schools on Reserves', 'Wild Challenge' and conservation weekends for young people – tying in strongly to goal 3 (good health and wellbeing)
- Generating high quality learning resources for programmes such as Wild Challenge and the Big School Birdwatch, assessed through internal quality mechanisms and through the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (goal 4 – quality education)
- Promoting behaviours that support diversity and inclusion through ensuring the organisation's offers are focused on where people are (urban) and there is

something for everyone. Schools are a target location and families are recognised as important enablers for engagement. Resources are also available online and free of charge (goal 10 – reduced inequalities)

- Offering opportunities for direct engagement and protection of 'life on land', through creation and management of reserves. Young people are specifically engaged through the organisation's Phoenix Forum (goal 15 – life on land).

Additionally, the RSPB is on the board of the Sustainable Schools Alliance<sup>9</sup> currently working out what the opportunities are in relation to the Sustainable Schools Doorways & the new Nature & Biodiversity doorway<sup>10</sup> with reference to the SDGs.

### Discussion

The following key points were raised during the presentations and subsequent discussions.

- The SDGs are a useful way in to exploring issues linked to sustainability. Their holistic nature is welcomed in terms of the issues covered, and this means that much existing work in this area can be mapped onto the SDGs. However, it was noted that organisations need to be aware of the potential for doing so to become a 'tick box exercise' rather than leading to meaningful engagement with the SDGs.
- It was also noted that, despite being a 'way in' for some, the SDGs could also be off-putting given their (potentially daunting) scale and level of detail (17 goals, 169 targets and 232 indicators). In some cases, organisations have avoided reference to the SDGs in delivering engagement activities with young people for this reason.
- The holistic application of the SDGs to all countries also provides an opportunity to engage learners in the experiences of other young people around the world, and to highlight and challenge assumptions.
- Despite this description as holistic, it was felt that there are some vital aspects missing, related to learning for rather than simply about the SDGs. For example, understanding the differences power and governance, systems thinking and agency. These limitations, as well those related to how the SDGs were formed, are framed, and what they exclude also provide a valuable opportunity for critical reflection which it is vital to include when exploring the SDGs with young people.
- It was proposed that NGOs are potentially in a position to explore the SDGs with young people in a way that schools cannot - giving them the licence to focus more on different viewpoints and critiques of the SDGs, raising the question as to whether more or less should be done by NGOs, and if more, how radical do things need to be?
- Following this discussion, it was noted that the SDGs have the potential to drive increased interaction between formal and informal organisations in the education sector. Resulting strategies and frameworks should consider the competencies of learners at the centre, and reflecting the variance between different stages of learning.

### 3. What does research tell us about the effectiveness of Goal-focused work?

The SDGs have raised new hopes and opportunities for the development education agenda through its references to themes such as global citizenship. However it could

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<sup>9</sup> <http://sustainable-schools-alliance.org.uk/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://sustainable-schools-alliance.org.uk/sustainable-schools-framework/>



equally be argued that the SDGs could restrict creative debate and dialogue through proposing a very prescriptive approach to both subject matter and approach to learning. What is needed is a constructive and open debate about what should be the determining agenda, pedagogy or the SDGs?

#### *Issues with goal-orientated approaches*

It is worth noting the apparent contradiction between setting goals and learning because learning does not follow a linear path. But there is perhaps a value in making a distinction between performance-orientated (i.e. am I doing this) and learning-orientated (i.e. things I need to question or find out more about) approaches (Button, Mathieu and Zajac, 1996<sup>11</sup>).

Whilst there is evidence that, unlike the Millennium Development Goals, there is greater attention being paid to research with the SDGs, the focus still tends to be on progress against pre-determined goals. Where there is a difference is that there is a much less prescribed set of indicators. The culture of the SDGs is much more of a bottom-up approach, encouraging innovation. However, it is highly likely, as a result of pressure from policy-makers and the results orientated culture that dominates education and development, that aspects of this more learning-based approach may well get lost. Similarly there is a risk in aligning educational goals with the achievement of international goals, and, thus of setting things up to fail.

#### *Developing a research culture around education and SDGs*

The SDGs, if seen as tools to engage in debate and perhaps promoting a sense of vision, could be used to support a research culture around ESD. But the focus should be on learning and pedagogy and research could look at the extent to which the SDGs are encouraging a different pedagogically approach to learning about sustainable development.

The SDGs can provide some themes for global learning practice, however they could also lead to dangers of goal-orientated approaches and measuring progress through a series of tick boxes.

Teacher education can make an important contribution to raising understanding of Sustainable Development Goals within education. There is a tendency in many countries for ESD and GCE (global citizenship education) to be promoted within teacher education along parallel lines. To maximise impact, there is a need for these initiatives to come more closely together.

Civil society organisations and policy-makers outside education have tended to have a major influence in determining the practices of ESD and GCE within teacher education. To measure progress, indicators need to be developed that make connections between ESD and GCE and current themes within education such as global competencies, cultural understanding and moral and social purpose of teaching. Networks, be they national, regional or international, can play an important role in sharing expertise and influencing policy-makers.

#### *Summary*

The SDGs provide opportunities for promoting the value of sustainable development and global citizenship within education. The associated concepts and approaches vary enormously around the world with, for example, what human rights might mean being interpreted differently by policy-makers. There is a danger of developing a tick box approach and just trying to find where words like environment, global, rights and gender are covered without looking at distinctive pedagogical approaches.

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<sup>11</sup> Button, Mathieu and Zajac, (1996), Goal orientation in organisational research: A conceptual and empirical foundation, *Organisational behaviour and human decision processes*, 67(1), p.26-48

Promotion of various terms in section 4.7 poses wider questions about the purpose of education, its relation to societal goals and needs and extent to which a values based approach underpinned the activities.

Identifying quantifiable measurable indicators of progress virtually impossible and also in the end not that useful apart from themes such as extent to which policy-makers are making explicit mention and engagement with the terms and level of resourcing given to them to encourage their promotion within education. Hartmeyer (2017) recently commented that the SDGs imply there is a '*fixed set of knowledge and skills we must acquire to reach a sustainable future*'. Learning does not follow a linear pattern and includes processes of experimentation, reflection and creativity. The key is how educators perceive and use the SDGs for making sense of and engaging in the globalised world today.

## Discussion

The following key points were raised during the subsequent discussions.

- Rather than a tick box exercise, both in terms of knowledge about the SDGs and the skills needed to address each goal, young people see the SDGs as a challenge. We don't have the knowledge and skills required yet, and they can play an important role in identifying these.
- There has been a major shift in talking about content and purpose of education, what do we want people to learn? To become decent and responsible human beings or is it about getting the skills needed to perform a job? This has been a separate discourse in the past with education focused on knowledge acquisition in the West (in contrast, an educated person in China is described as 'someone who has learned how to ask questions'). The SDGs are raising questions about purpose of education up the agenda.
- Indicators that could be used to understand the extent to which schools are already pursuing this view of education include reviewing the mission statements of schools and identifying the extent to which the school references the contribution it and its pupils and community make to a sustainable world.
- Discourses on the purpose of education should also be included within teacher training, as well as specific reference to concepts of global citizenship, ESD, environmental education etc.
- Target 4.7 within goal 4 references the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development. There is a collective need for researchers and practitioners to evidence the link between 4.7 and quality education, and also what quality education looks like when applied to all 17 SDGs. Framing evidence around competencies is a useful approach, and one that moves away from concepts of education associated mainly with knowledge acquisition.

## 4. Reflections and challenges

The discussions and conversations over the 24 hour period generated key insights amongst participants as well as highlighting a number of challenges, both broad and narrow in their nature, to be considered when exploring the SDGs with young people.

### 4.1 Key insights

- Amongst educators, policy-makers and NGOs, there is an eagerness to show willing and support for the SDGs as 'the best thing we have to work with', but a degree of uncertainty over how to relate to them and some uneasiness about doing so. There is also a lack of consensus on how and where the SDGs can play a part in young people's learning and development
- Similarly, there is a concern that those involved in stimulating, encouraging or enabling learning in young people tend not to take all the SDGs into consideration, potentially as a result of the prime focus of the SDGs on what can be summarised as 'social justice' without incorporating the impossibility of achieving 'justice' without addressing the compromising of the biosphere's ability to support life.
- The solutions are at a local, school and community level and that students need to be given opportunities to engage with and ultimately apply and own the story of what needs to happen for the SDGs to be achieved. The approach taken by educators in educating young people on the SDGs needs to be one in which they are enabled to critically think about and consider their own opinions and ways they want to engage.
- While there is genuine interest in advancing the SDG from those working on the ground level, such as schools and NGOs, there seems to be a lack of co-ordinated efforts for systemic change that include various governance levels (international, national, regional and local). There are some great examples of schools articulating the SDGs in teaching and learning. It is unclear, however, how well such efforts are actually reaching the majority of schools in the UK.
- No matter how good the contribution of SDG engagement is where it has been taken up, there is a real need to work strategically to expand and produce resources for continuation and new participants. Continuation includes the need for young people to learn alongside adults if effective change is to be achieved.
- Reflecting on the role of the SDGs and how young people are engaged with and for them highlights a need to move debates on to consider the education system as a whole - to define what education is for and to negotiate this with a far wider constituency than elected politicians and advisors.

### 4.2 Challenges for Government

- The SDGs are knitted together by a common set of values. Recognising the role that education has in achieving the SDGs triggers the need for a national conversation around the purpose of education as being for the development of a responsible and just society rather than for the acquisition of skills to complete a job, and amendment of the Education Act as a result.
- Convene a cross-sector coalition of organisations and individuals to consider the vision of the purpose of education and to deliver the systemic change necessary to realising this agreed purpose.
- From the perspectives outlined during the consultation, there is a need to consider the discrepancies between approaches to enabling and supporting learning for the

SDGs across the UK nations. Similarly there is a need to consider the opportunities for incorporating learning for and about the SDGs at different stages of education.

#### 4.3 Challenges for NGOs

- Contribute to broadening the evidence base that confirms the beneficial outcomes from exploring the SDGs can generate – outcomes that are valued by a range of stakeholders from the learners themselves to government departments including attainment, wellbeing and teacher motivation.
- Broaden engagement with the SDGs through linking in with broader conversations around the purposes of education and raise the themes and vision behind SDGs to influence key charitable foundations and funders. This links with the need to consider the opportunities to embed learning within other frameworks (for example the Education 2030 project<sup>12</sup>) that address (but are not limited to) the SDGs and vice versa.
- Opportunities to explore the SDGs with young people beyond the formal curriculum gives NGOs a licence to work in a way that offers a space for young people to develop their values in ways that may not currently be available within schools.
- Supporting schools to deliver journeys of learning related to the SDGs is crucial, however this must include consideration of 'how' these journeys are delivered as well as what they will learn along the way.
- The SDGs present those working in the field with an opportunity to rethink assumptions made about the experiences of young people in the global north and south and the false dichotomies that exist and are perpetuated by development education.

#### 4.4 Challenges for Schools

- Those who have direct experience of exploring the SDGs with young people are highly aware of the positive outcomes of these experiences for learners as well as their wider communities. Showcasing and communicating these outcomes more consistently, precisely and completely is essential for gaining support both within and beyond individual institutions.
- The key is to integrate the SDGs into curriculum learning, not in one subject, but through project based learning where students take a lead role in addressing the challenges that we face.
- Take advantage of the opportunity for curriculum enrichment offered at KS3.
- Use new and existing partnerships and networks to spread good practice and resources.
- Any exploration of the SDGs should include the opportunity to develop critical thinking. This raises the question as to whether it is possible for young people to get behind the SDGs once they have been through the process of critical reflection. Using exploration as an opportunity for developing action competency is therefore also key.
- Values education can be a contentious topic for schools and teachers. The SDGs offer an opportunity for discussion for students to develop their values. It is

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/education-2030.htm>

important for schools to strike the balance between encouraging specific values and providing space for values to develop.

## Appendices

### Attendees

Jamie Agombar	Head of Sustainability, National Union of Students
Professor Douglas Bourn	Professor of Development Education, UCL-Institute of Education
Judy Braus	Executive Director, North American Association for Environmental Education
James Bridge	Secretary-General, UK National Commission for UNESCO
Susan Bush	Curriculum Development Leader, Torriano Primary School, London
Esther Carvalhaes	Analyst, OECD
Helen Cox	Leading Practitioner, Sir John Lawes School in Harpenden, Herts
Orla Devine	Global Learning Programme Coordinator Northern Ireland, Centre for Global Education
Rachel Drayson	Insight Manager – Sustainability, National Union of Students
Richard Dunne	Headteacher, Ashley CofE Primary School, Walton on Thames
Rowan Ferguson	Head of School Policy, Church of England
Ann Finlayson	Executive Director and Founder, Sustainability and Environmental Education (SEEd)
Alan Hands	Strategy and Change Manager (Youth Social Action), The Scout Association
Kate Lea	Global Citizenship and Education Adviser, Oxfam GB
Alexander Leicht	Chief of Section, UNESCO
Judy Ling Wong CBE	Honorary President, Black Environment Network
Dr Harriet Marshall	National Leader (SW), Global Learning Programme, Pearson UK
Jess McQuail	Chief Executive, Think Global
Ian Menzies	Senior Education Officer, Education Scotland
Lydia Meryll	Chair, Manchester Environmental Education Network; Secretary, Levenshulme Youth Project; Executive Member, Women's International League of Peace and Freedom in the UK (WILPF UK); Member, Socialist Environmental Resources Association (SERA); Honorary Senior Fellow of Knowledge Exchange, University of Manchester School of the Environment Education and Development (SEED)
Susy Ndaruhutse	Head of International Development, Education Development Trust; Director: GLP-Wales
Dr Morgan Phillips	Co-Director, The Glacier Trust
Professor Bill Scott	Emeritus Professor, University of Bath; NAEE Chair of Trustees
Hannah Stanton	Director, TheGoals.org
Dr Paul Vare	Senior Lecturer - Research Development, University of Gloucestershire
Carl Ward	President, Association of School and College Leaders
Suzanne Welch	Education Manager, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Dr Rehema White	Sustainable Development Degree Co-ordinator, University of St Andrews
Dr Tanya Wisely	Global Citizenship Education Adviser, IDEAS (International Development Education Association Scotland); Director: GLP-Scotland

## Programme

<b>Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017</b>	
13.45	<p><i>Introduction</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Welcome to St George's House – Gary McKeone (St George's House)</li> <li>- Welcome to the consultation: purposes and programme – Bill Scott (University of Bath) and Jamie Agombar (NUS)</li> </ul>
14.10	<p><i>In exploring the SDGs with young people, what are we trying to achieve? Four national perspectives</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wales – Susy Ndaruhutse (Education Development Trust / GLP – Wales)</li> <li>- Scotland – Tanya Wisely (GLP – Scotland)</li> <li>- Northern Ireland – Orla Devine (GLP – Northern Ireland)</li> <li>- England – Jess McQuail (Think Global)</li> </ul>
15.10	<p><i>Reflection</i></p> <p>The SDGs, sustainability, education and learning: issues to bear in mind – Paul Vare (University of Gloucestershire)</p>
15.40	Break
16.00	<p><i>How do we explore the SDGs with young people? The work of two schools</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Torriano Primary School, Camden – Sue Bush</li> <li>- Sir John Lawes Secondary School, Harpenden – Helen Cox</li> </ul>
17.00	Break
18.00	<p><i>How do we explore the SDGs with young people? The work of three NGOs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oxfam – Kate Lea</li> <li>- TheGoals.org – Hannah Stanton</li> <li>- RSPB – Suzanne Welch</li> </ul>
19.00	End of day one
<b>Friday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2017</b>	
09.15	<p><i>Thinking about the consultation so far and the propositions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Small group discussions</li> </ul>
10.00	<p><i>Thinking about the consultation so far and the propositions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plenary feedback</li> </ul>
10.30	Break
11.00	<p><i>What does research tell us about the effectiveness of Goal-focused work?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Doug Bourn (UCL-Institute of Education)</li> </ul>
11.30	<p><i>Reflecting on the validity of the two propositions</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does goal-related learning by students help increase the likelihood that the goals will be valued, supported and hence realised?</li> <li>2. Does a critical study of the goals enhance the focus, and help raise the quality, of student learning?</li> </ol> <p>A conversation between Harriet Marshall (GLP-England) and Morgan Phillips (The Glacier Trust)</p>
12.00	<i>Final thoughts</i>
12.15	<i>End of day two</i>

# ST GEORGE'S HOUSE



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