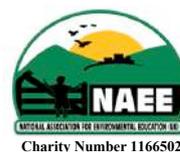


National Association for Environmental Education (UK) Annual Review 2019 / 20



This is a report on the work of NAEE from August 2019 to July 2020. It is an account of key developments and the issues we faced, and contains reports on: finance and management, publications, new trustee and NAEE Fellow appointments, and our collaboration with like-minded organisations. It also includes a number of articles and blog posts that were originally published during the year.

Like all organisations, we have been affected by the impact of the Covid virus on the UK. However, some aspects of our work have been unaffected. In particular, and happily, all the core team have been well throughout, and many activities have carried on as normal. Prominent examples of this are the journal, our connection to wider audiences through the website and social media, our administration, governance, communication with members, and liaison and co-operation with other groups. In terms of involvement with national initiatives, we remain supportive of *Teach the Future* in whatever ways we can, and we are a member of the *Heads of Education, Our Shared World*, and *Natural Environmental Sector Partnership* initiatives. Although we do not play a leading part in

any of these, our Chair of Trustees is a member of the Teach the Future adult advisory group. It is worth noting [i] that the volume of traffic to the Association through the website and via email has increased from the previous year. This increase indicates a greater national visibility for our work.

Despite the positive aspect of the opening paragraph, the impact of the virus on other aspects of our work has been very marked. These include the Kenrick school bursary scheme, and the two projects that we are funding with external organisations. As all these involve working with young people and schools, it could not be otherwise. We do not know when re-starting these elements of our work will be possible, but it will only happen when it is mutually agreed as being safe and sensible to do so. At the time of writing, it looks as if it could be the Spring 2021 before this is likely. Some of the other development projects that we agreed in 2018/19 are continuing albeit more slowly than anticipated.



The central image on this page is of NAEE Vice-President, Mrs Anne Kenrick who sadly died this earlier year. See page 14 for an appreciation of her contribution to NAEE.

The other images are of children who are enjoying environmental education funded by Kenrick bursaries during the year. Images: NAEE



NAEE's charitable objects are to provide a public benefit by advancing environmental education within early years settings, primary and secondary schools, and institutions responsible for teacher education within the UK and elsewhere.

Writing to the Prime Minister

In late January 2020, *Zamzam Ibrahim*, the President of *SOS_UK* and the *NUS* wrote to the Prime Minister – see: tinyurl.com/y5khza82 – reminding him that, thirty years ago at the UN General Assembly, Margaret Thatcher called for urgent action on the greenhouse effect. ZamZam was writing to represent all young people in the country.

“NAEE thinks that it is vital that your government helps change the approach to education so that young people at all stages can, in appropriate ways, learn about the climate emergency and ecological crisis, learn how these are likely to affect their lives, and learn what we in the UK (thinking globally) might do.”

Her letter specifically asked for the Prime Minister’s personal help in ensuring that the education system is a central pillar of his government’s strategy on climate change. As NAEE desires this as well, we wrote to Downing Street in support of ZamZam’s request. Here is our letter:

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP,
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

14th February 2020

Dear Prime Minister

We are writing in support of the letter recently sent to you by Zamzam Ibrahim, President of the NUS and SOS_UK, in which she called for your personal help in ensuring that the education system is a central pillar of your government’s strategy on climate change and the ecological crisis that we face. We write on behalf of the National Association for Environmental Education [NAEE] which is a UK charity that was formed in the 1960s to encourage and support schools and teachers in helping young people learn about the natural world and humanity’s complete dependence on it. NAEE publishes a journal, provides resources, information and ideas for teachers. We also give financial support for schools to enable their students to visit outdoor education centres, and we collaborate with like-minded organisations to help young people

learn about the world they live in, and the threats to it. One of those organisations is *Teach the Future* which Zamzam wrote about.

NAEE thinks that it is vital that your government helps change the approach to education so that young people at all stages can, in appropriate ways, learn about the climate emergency and ecological crisis, learn how these are likely to affect their lives, and learn what we in the UK (thinking globally) might do about it. Doing this will help prepare young people to play their part in facing up to and helping to deal with what is the greatest challenge that humanity has ever faced. We agree with Zamzam when she says that she cannot see every school and college taking substantive, co-ordinated action on this without the encouragement and support of central government through changes to the curriculum and a revision of the 2002 Education Act.

Further, like Zamzam and the organisations she represents, we believe that we need much more than just compulsory education on climate change and the ecological crisis, and a focus on low-carbon skills, which is why we support the pragmatic recommendations for education policy that Teach the Future has put together. We hope your government will support these proposals and ensure that young people are stimulated into working positively for necessary change. NAEE is committed to helping in this crucial work.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Nina Hatch NAEE Executive Director
Prof William Scott NAEE Chair of Trustees
cc: Rt Hon Gavin Williamson MP, Secretary of State for Education
Lord Deben, Chair of the Committee on Climate Change

.....

We did not get a response, and the coming of the virus has meant that all contact between the government and Teach the Future came to a halt. The problem, however, remains.

Financial Summary

Because of the impact of the virus, there has been a significant underspend on this year's budget. We hope that this will be rebalanced next year as all allocated but unspent money for our funded development projects and the Kenrick bursaries is being carried forward into 2020/21, and we have reassured our partners that the funding is secure. The overall financial footing of the Association remains sound, however. Of particular note this year were the £1,500 received for Kenrick bursary spending at Martineau Gardens, and £1,229 in unrestricted donations. The level of unrestricted income is unprecedented and has come from individuals, NGOs and business, and from trustees who have donated speaking fees. NAEE continues to be very appreciative of this generosity.

At the 2019 AGM a decision was taken to draw down some of our invested capital and use this to fund a number of development projects over two years. See page 6 for more detail.

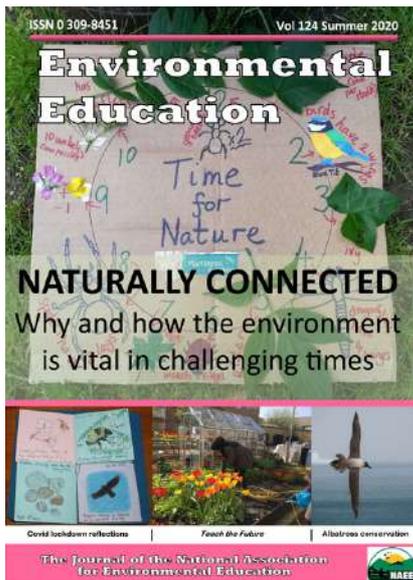
| 2018 / 19 | | 2019 / 20 | |
|-----------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| Income | Expenditure | Income | Expenditure |
| £33,869 | £12,248 | £13,238.38 | £11,776.07 |

| 2019 / 20 Income | % | 2019 / 20 Expenditure | % |
|-------------------------------------|----|---|----|
| Investments | 57 | Facilitating curriculum development | 40 |
| Membership fees | 15 | Financial support for schools (bursaries) | 21 |
| Donations | 25 | Collaborating with other organisations | 22 |
| Publications, sales, royalties, etc | 4 | Core professional services | 4 |
| | | Operating costs | 13 |

83% of expenditure went directly on the main ways we deliver our charitable objectives: bursaries, publications, networking, communications, and the website. We should note here that this does not include the considerable, but incalculable, in-kind contribution from members and volunteers to the operation of the Association. It is good to be able to record the Association's heartfelt thanks to all who give their time freely to what we do. This in-kind contribution never gets represented on a balance sheet but we should be lost without it. Fuller details of the Association's audited accounts are available in our annual return to the Charity Commission which can be found on the Charity Commission's website.

The NAEE Journal

As normal, three volumes of the journal, *Environmental Education*, have been published.



Vol 122 (Autumn 2019) was a print issue in collaboration with the London Environmental Educators' Forum (LEEF) to celebrate LEEF's 30th Anniversary. Everyone who attended the Anniversary event at the Natural History Museum received a copy of the journal which focused on the urban environment.

Vol 123 (Spring 2020) had a focus on Biodiversity: learning, understanding and protecting life on Earth.

Vol 124 (Summer 2020) had our connections to nature as its theme: why and how the environment is vital in challenging times. It explored how various people and groups were coping with the impact of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Volumes 123 and 124 are currently restricted to members; but previous journals are available at: naee.org.uk/ee-journal

Governance & Management

NAEE's charitable objects are to provide a public benefit by advancing environmental education within early years settings, primary and secondary schools, and institutions responsible for teacher education within the UK and elsewhere, in particular but without limitation by ...

- [i] facilitating curriculum development through the provision of resources, information and ideas for teachers,
- [ii] providing financial support for pupils to visit outdoor education centres, and
- [iii] collaborating with organisations that have related objectives.

The ways in which these are usually realised are: Hugh Kenrick bursaries for schools; publishing (journals and reports), web and social media outputs, and collaboration with other organisations. This year has seen a number of new collaborations.

In addition to these, a decision was made to fund a number of specific projects to advance environmental education. These are discussed on page 6.

During the year, the number of trustees was increased to the full complement of nine by the recruitment of Graham Frost, the headteacher of Robert Ferguson School in Carlisle, and Paula Owens, an independent consultant. This increases the number of elected trustees to six. There have been four meetings of the Trustee Board during the year, all bar one of which were via zoom. Attendance overall was 83%, and five trustees attended all the meetings.

There were three executive committee meetings, one of which was by zoom. However, the bulk of the week-by-week activity, which is the essence of what NAEE does, continues to be carried out by effectively-co-ordinated working groups with efficient professional administration.

Trustees, Officers and Volunteers in 2019 / 20

Trustees

Justin Dillon (President)
 Gabrielle Back
 Tim Baker
 Graham Frost (newly co-opted from 02/2020)
 Nina Hatch (*ex officio*)
 Elsa Lee (*ex officio*)
 Paula Owens (newly co-opted from 02/2020)
 Morgan Phillips
 William Scott (Chair)

Executive Committee elected officers

Nina Hatch (Chair)
 Elsa Lee (Vice Chair)
 Sue Shanks (Treasurer)

Co-opted members

| | | |
|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Gabrielle Back | Ben Ballin | Tom Davies |
| David Fellows | Sue Fenoughty | Juliette Green |
| Emily Munn | Henricus Peters | Alona Sheridan |

New Fellows

The NAEE's Fellows scheme began in 2017 to recognise the contribution that individuals are making to environmental education across the UK through their work, and so that the Association can work closely with them shared aims. We appointed three new Fellows last year: **Beth Collier**, Wild in the City, **Dan Danahar**, Dorothy Stringer School, and **Jess Tipton**, St Paul's Girls' School. The full Fellow list is at: tinyurl.com/y29x8ukb

Hugh Kenrick School Bursaries

Awarding bursaries to schools in Birmingham and the West Midlands to help them provide environmental education is at the heart of what NAEE has been doing since 2012. It is possible because of the generosity of the Kenrick family trusts. In 2019/20, only 7 Kenrick grants could be taken up owing to school closures during the COVID-19 lockdown and all seven institutions were new to the scheme. We awarded other grants which are now held over, for use during the 2020/21 school year. The number of bursaries given since the start of the scheme is now 108, and the number of schools receiving is 81. Fewer than 10% have been given to secondary schools, and increasing this proportion remains a challenge. The total value of bursaries granted is now over £35,000, and the number of students benefiting from the scheme is now almost 6000. We shall mark the 6000th student with publicity, a fund-raising campaign, and a report on the development of the Kenrick bursary scheme.

Hugh Kenrick Bursaries in Action: Studying Biomes

This is an account by **Birgitta Varga** of her visit to **Birmingham Botanical Gardens** in 2020 with a Year 4 group from **Balsall Common Primary School** as part of NAEF's **Hugh Kenrick Days** bursary scheme.

32 pupils were carefully selected from our four Year 4 classes to act as 'Habitat & ECO' Ambassadors. The cohort had started to learn about different habitats and the attending pupils had an engaging appetite towards extending their knowledge further to also include the impacts that tropical rainforests have on our lives, even though they are on the other side of the world.



Learning about rainforest plants and animals: Image B. Varga

James, our Botanical Gardens teacher, took us on a rainforest journey, teaching us all about tribes, animals and plants. The children had the opportunity to engage with hands-on activities such as: handling and smelling different nuts and seeds; holding bamboo sticks and learning that these can grow up to 2m within 48hrs; holding cotton bolls and learning that cotton grows on a branch which requires lots of water that is becoming a shortage; and carefully handling various small animals (snake, tenrec, chameleon). Alongside this, they learnt the hard facts about why many animals become extinct and that this is caused by humans.

We learnt that 10% of our oxygen comes from rainforest trees. We all had to breathe in 10 times, which the children found fascinating as the 10th breath would be oxygen supplied by the rainforest.

The hard facts about deforestation created an "oh no!" among the pupils; it was an eye opener. From this, they informed their peers, and as a cohort, beautiful work developed, specifically their 'Letters to the Loggers'. Additional feedback from the pupils included quotes such as: "stop people from chopping down trees" and "plant more trees to help the

environment".

The pupils learnt that there are different layers in a rainforest, with different animals living in these layers, and that by chopping down a tree, many species will become extinct. They had to guess why they think a plant growing at ground level might develop big leaves – they know that it captures more sun but learnt that it also produces more oxygen. Also, they were taught about climate and why plants have certain shapes and forms to hold on to water, or direct it towards the roots.

We did a Rainforest Challenge, where the pupils had to become scientists finding clues hidden in the Tropical biome, e.g. rubber comes from a stem, cinnamon is a bark and that there are 'host' plants.

We also visited the Desert biome and did plant comparisons with the Tropical biome.



School display about the rainforest: Image B. Varga

Back at school, pupils carried out the following activities:

- Colour code a World Biome map, and biomes and countries in South America (geography/English)
- Sort rainforest history into correct chronological order (history/numeracy)
- Understand the different layers of the rainforest plus using correct terminology (English/topic)
- Create deforestation posters and write letters against deforestation (English/art/values)
- Classroom and library displays (DT/English/art)
- Become an active litter picker in school and in the community (British values)

Examples of Partnership

As noted above, we have funded two projects with external organisations this year, and both have had to be put on hold because of the virus. One was with **Leicester City Council** with a focus on carbon literacy, working with school and university students and their teachers to raise awareness of climate change and develop scientific understanding and campaigning skills. The other is with **Margaret Fleming Associates** and the **Woodcraft Folk** with a focus on supporting climate leadership in schools and youth groups.

In addition to these two initiatives, NAEF collaborated with a range of other organisations during the year. The following is a selection of these:

COBIS

Our work with the Council of Overseas British International Schools [COBIS] on its Eco-film award was a great success. We judged 43 videos made by young people across the world and determined winner (1) and runner-up (2) awards in the key stages 1/2 and 3-5 categories. The prize-winners were announced during an on-line ceremony in May. This is an extract from our final report:

"It was a privilege to be able to see something of the operations of so many schools from across the globe, and to listen to the passionate and knowledgeable young people who featured in front of and behind the lens. We loved the creativity and innovation shown by the projects, and appreciated the range of approaches taken to filming. There was some great use of statistics to illustrate the issues and contextualise outcomes, and there was plenty of evidence of cross-phase working and whole-school involvement. We wish everyone well as you continue to help your schools become ever more sustainable.

We have identified schools in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe as the 2020 winners and runners up. What characterised these entries was a clear story about an innovative and creative student project that made a change to the operation of the school, and which was well told in an engaging way with students' voices to the fore. In these videos music and images were carefully chosen to add to the story, and data were

used with precision to illustrate issues and outcomes."

We have agreed to work with COBIS again in 2020/21.

OCR

We accepted an invitation to be a member of OCR's strategic policy board to guide the development of a Natural History GCSE examination. This group aims to help shape a qualification which the organisers hope will enable young people to acquire relevant knowledge, understanding and skills for their future with climate change a global reality. It has to be acknowledged that this is something of a controversial initiative. In particular, as an optional course, it will only be ever taken by a small minority of students as and there are concerns that its existence would detract from efforts to ensure that all students in secondary schools can experience effective and purposeful environmental education.

NGA

We have an MoU in place with the National [school] Governance Association to:

"write guidance on environment and sustainability issues for the governing bodies of schools in England. The purpose of the guidance is to help school governing bodies ask relevant questions of school leaders as the school develops and reviews appropriate policies and practices about the environment and sustainability both through the curriculum and in the operation of the school more widely".

We are not only enthused about this opportunity for the obvious value of doing so, we are also mindful that the NGA has the ear of many thousands of governing bodies across English schools. As such, this activity could give us both publicity, and members. The guidance is set to be distributed in the Autumn.

30 Years of LEEF

It was good that so many of those closely involved in NAEF could be part of the 30-year celebrations of the London Environmental Educators' Forum, with some making invited contributions. As noted above, everyone attending received a copy of Vol 122 of the journal.

What's the Big Idea?

NAEE has published a number of blog posts over the past 12 months that have had curriculum as a focus, and one of them is re-printed here. It is written by **Ben Ballin**. As with all our authored contributions, what follows are Ben's views which are not necessarily shared by NAEE. This develops arguments about the content and purpose of a green curriculum that Richard Dawson and Ben first considered in a blog earlier in the year. In this post, Ben considers the related question of curriculum intent.

Curriculum intent is the first of the 'three i's' in the 2019 Ofsted Inspection Framework. As we shall see, it begs questions about what a school's curriculum is for and how it is organised, subdivided and sequenced. The other two 'i's' are 'implementation' (basically, how things get taught and learned) and 'impact' (whether children or young people have actually learned things as intended).

Beeton mess?

Those schools in England that follow the 2014 National Curriculum know that it is a very different beast from the first, multi-volume National Curriculum of 1988 or subsequent national curricula, whose approach to aims was once memorably described by Robin Alexander as "The Mrs Beeton approach – first catch your curriculum, then liberally garnish with aims."

The 2014 curriculum is neither pretty, nor easy to love, but it does have a very modest appetite for aims, having only two. The first of these is that it "provides pupils with an introduction to the essential knowledge they need to be educated citizens. It introduces pupils to the best that has been thought and said, and helps engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement."

Let's set aside the thorny question of who and what decides 'the best' for the moment. The only other aim for the National Curriculum as a whole is that, because it is also slimline in content, the statutory curriculum "is just one element in the education of every child. There is time and space in the school day and in each week, term and year to range beyond the national curriculum specifications. The national curriculum

provides an outline of core knowledge around which teachers can develop exciting and stimulating lessons to promote the development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills as part of the wider school curriculum."

Assuming that the curriculum designers are correct about that time and space, that aim might be quite useful. It means that the school curriculum can (in principle) include but go beyond the rather meagre fare in the National Curriculum. So, while the 2014 curriculum is notoriously short of references to the environment, sustainable development, climate change etc. (many of which performed a conspicuous vanishing act during its drafting process), they could still be part of the school curriculum ... if a school wants them.

Do you want any greens with that?

So, back to 'Intent'. What this seems to mean is that a school curriculum could have a commitment to environmental responsibility and sustainable development, not only as a rather generalised and overarching value, but as part of what its curriculum as a whole is intending to achieve. In my experience, many schools – provided that they are not otherwise in crisis – do indeed choose to do this.

This then takes us back to what I said earlier about curriculum organisation, subdivision, and sequencing. If a school wants to prioritise its green intentions, it makes sense that subjects too are invited to make their contribution to this agenda: especially subjects such as science, geography or citizenship, which obviously lend themselves well to it (but why not also P.E. art, music, English, drama and the rest?) To misquote John F. Kennedy, it makes sense to ask not just what the environment can do for each subject but what each subject can do for the environment. As an aside, Fran Martin and I had a crack at setting this out a few years ago in relation to climate change, on behalf of Tide~ global learning and the West Midlands Broadband Network.

Loyal subjects

Let's take geography in primary schools as an example. What is the subject's 'Intent' in the school? Maybe its contribution to environmental and sustainability education can be integrated into a subject statement?

If we are asking what the subject as a whole contributes to children's experience and understanding of environment and sustainable development, then the statement is going to highlight opportunities for fieldwork and for learning in and about the environment, for exploring issues in the news, for global and intercultural understanding, for exploring how people affect places (and landscapes affect people).

In devising long and medium-term plans, subject leaders are going to make choices and prioritise opportunities accordingly. This might for example mean seeking out learning with 'an edge', where children make decisions about the management of local or school spaces, present arguments – supported by primary evidence – for measures that limit car parking and air pollution, design and develop wildlife areas, plan safe and healthy travel routes and so forth. It might also mean ensuring that children learn key vocabulary, skills and concepts that help them become environmentally-aware, thoughtful and active citizens. In structuring the school curriculum, it should even be possible to show how this understanding and skill-set develops from one year or term to the next, as part of a planned learning sequence.

Within those topics and plans, activities can be organised and resourced so as to achieve such desired outcomes: the *NAEE journal* is one of many useful sources of advice on quality resourcing to achieve such aims. For this particular subject,

the *Geographical Association* and *Royal Geographical Society* also offer outstanding support (other subject *associations* are also available).

All eyes

Thinking carefully and logically about 'intent' in this way can have knock-on effects for 'implementation' too: the quality and interestingness of teaching activities and strategies. With a little care, it means that a school is going to be offering a rich learning experience that minimises the use of worksheets, roots learning in experience rather than abstraction and provides children with reasons to want to find out about their world and to use and apply the language and tools at their disposal: the sort of learning that NAEE has long championed; the sort of learning that results in 'impacts' that benefit but go beyond the individual learner.

These three 'I's are at the heart of the 2019 Ofsted framework, but they are not the whole of the beast. It is also worth looking at what it asks, for example, in relation to wellbeing, personal and social development. Maybe there are significant opportunities here, too, for environmental and sustainability education? I would be interested to hear people's thoughts on this – maybe it would be a useful focus for a future blog?

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Ben Ballin is a primary geography consultant and a Fellow of NAEE. He can be contacted at: benballin@hotmail.com

Is there one book every environmental educator should read?

Is it *Silent Spring*, perhaps? Or *Walden*? *The Natural History of Selbourne*, or *The Origin of Species*, maybe, or *A Sand County Almanac*? Then there's *Last Child in the Woods*, *Small is Beautiful* or *The Web of Life*. *The Prelude*, perchance, *The Deserted Village*, or *The Mores*? Or *Emile*.

Is it *Bedford 2046*, Marx's *Ecology*, *The Child in the City*, or *Streetwise*? Or *Deep Ecology: living as if nature mattered*, *Ariadne's Thread*, or *Environmentalism*?

Is it *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, or *Capitalism as if the World Matters*. Or *Collapse: how societies choose to fail or survive*, or *Forces of Change: an unorthodox view of history*; Or *Why we Disagree about Climate Change*, or *The Chicago Gangster Theory of Life*, or *After Sustainability*, and so on ...

This question sounds like a good ice-breaker at the next NAEE cocktail party. Meanwhile, if there's a new book you think we ought to review, please tell us via Twitter, Facebook, or by email to info@naee.org.uk

Reframing Environmental Education

This is an edited NAEF blog by **Morgan Phillips**, an NAEF trustee. Its focus is the request from **Global Action Plan (GAP)** and **Reboot the Future** for organisations to join them on a project to reframe environmental education. The project is grounded in research into the importance of values to the development of environmental attitudes and behaviours. Morgan is working on this at GAP and describes the background and aims of the project here.

Preparing students for an uncertain future can feel like an enormous challenge – one that teachers tell us weighs heavy on their minds. Decades of environmental education have failed to have a significant impact – (young) people know the key facts, but knowledge alone is an insufficient motivator. We believe we need to think differently about what environmental education is. We need to reassess its design and delivery. This action-learning project will bring together organisations with an interest in environmental education to:

1. actively assess the values nurtured by environmental educators, their resources and their programmes; and
2. test whether it is possible to educate *for* the environment without necessarily educating *about*

Environmental consciousness is only one factor shaping our lives, we have many other concerns; together they make up a set of influences that interact with each other to affect the values we hold. We hold a wide range of values, but some become more prominent in our lives than others – and this matters.

In our society, in particular, we can observe how *self-interest* (extrinsic) values loom large. They are present in the hundreds of adverts we are exposed to every day, the TV programmes we watch, our political discourse; and through the ways we are rewarded at work and school. In these ways and many others,

individualistic aspirations are promoted throughout society. They are sub-consciously internalised by adults and, often even more so, by children.

This is having a drastic impact on our emotional health; driving conditions like *narcissism*, *affluenza* and *status anxiety*. These, in turn, even in their mildest forms, can also have a negative impact on the health of our planet by fostering our craving for *stuff* – the products, experiences and status symbols that we turn to, to ease our anxieties and construct our identities.

The all-pervasiveness of these *self-interest* (extrinsic) values in society has another effect too; they crowd out the less flashy, but healthier, *compassionate* (intrinsic) values, preventing them from coming to the fore. We need to refocus; we need to re-balance this *values see-saw* and help compassionate values to rise.

So, while education *about* the environment has never been more urgent, education *for* the environment can be thought of as a much broader effort that has the ultimate goal of crowding out *self-interest* values by critiquing and weakening them at one end; and by activating and reinforcing *compassionate* values at the other. It is often less about the subject matter we teach and more about the values nurtured by our teaching. This is why we're asking whether it is time to reframe environmental education?

Morgan explains more about this initiative in a talk which is available at: tinyurl.com/y3kdhy5l There are also two blog posts that he wrote earlier in the year exploring Rutger Bregman's *Humankind a Hopeful History*. See: tinyurl.com/y6qzcrwn

For more details please contact Morgan at GAP: morgan.phillips@globalactionplan.org.uk

Page 10 reprints an article by **Raichael Lock** that was published in *Environmental Education* Vol 122. Raichael is the co-ordinator of the Manchester Environmental Education Network meen.org.uk which supports teachers, organisations and individuals working to promote EE and EfS.



Digging deeper into Manchester school soils:

Image Raichael Lock

Mud and MEEN: urban ES education in the post-industrial landscape of Manchester

As Maria Puig de le Bellacasa argued recently in her plenary at the Royal Geographic Society Conference in London, ‘soil’ is a perfect metaphor for our troubled relationship with the ‘Earth’. So, that means, for urban ES educators, teaching about mud is more important than ever. In Manchester, the legacy of our post-industrial past is evident in the everyday connections with soil. Digging a hole in some school grounds can be hard: rubble from old schools or housing stock prevents the spade from going deeper than a few inches, sometimes there is a layer of soil capping the hardcore below and on occasions there are indications of contamination.

Over the years, the Manchester Environmental Education Network has had plenty of experience working with Manchester’s soils – whether tree planting, forest gardening, vegetable growing or wildflower seeding – so we know the problems facing urban soils. However, we became acutely aware of the lack of local knowledge around soil quality when a school was being supported by local agencies to develop an allotment on contaminated land. This raised the question: how to help Manchester’s soils?

MEEN wanted to change the perception of contaminated/impoverished soils from being a threatening and insurmountable problem into an exciting learning project, involving practical actions to help soils and opportunities to share the learning with other communities. In 2016, the ‘Save our Soils’ partnership project was devised. The partnership reflects the importance of multi-agency approaches in environmental education in order to widen children’s aspirations and understanding of the world.

Designed to be responsive to the context of each school setting, MEEN works with schools to examine historical maps of the locale and then, if necessary, have the soil tested. So far six primary schools have engaged with the project with each school choosing its own trajectory depending on the soil and interests of the young people involved. Learning sessions have included thinking about the importance of soil, soil types, soil contamination and/or pH testing.

One school voted to learn about organic growing; another played the ‘soil web’ game; others chose to play MEEN’s ‘It’s a worm’s life’. There were activities such as doing an archaeological dig linking to historical maps, and planting trees and hedges to

improve soil quality. However, there were also plenty of valuable partnership activities, such as composting sessions at Debdale Eco Centre and bringing in their expertise to build raised beds; there were visits to the University of Salford soil laboratory for soil testing and, most recently, an artist was brought in to work with clay.

We know from research, such as that carried out by the University of Manchester, that heat waves and climate change have a much greater impact on soil microbes than previously realised. One activity every school chose was to examine soil critters with hand-held microscopes. This has proved key in helping young (and old) realise the incredible richness of the soil as a living system. In one instance an excited child ran over to me to let me know she had seen: “*a nematode poo*”, having already been amazed that such creatures existed, whilst another pupil declared: “*soil is awesome! It’s so full of life!*” It’s also clear that this previously unknown underworld has inspired a desire to care for soils. Children have requested that the living soil samples are returned safely to their ‘home’ and great care has been taken by the pupils not to harm the wildlife.



Exploring soils and microscopic creatures. Image: Raichael Lock

As suspected, though, finding a ‘living’ urban soil proved interesting. Pre-empting the lack of soil biota in school soils, MEEN collected samples from a local forest garden where years of permaculture practice has allowed the soil to flourish. Sadly, school soil samples barely produce more than worms. It has also proved difficult to make much improvement in the school soils for a variety of reasons. Firstly, soil reclamation is too big a task for such a small project. However, one school with contamination planted *Salix* hyper-accumulators with the aspiration that the university will test the leaves to see if heavy metals can be removed. Where soil is impoverished, silver birch trees have been planted to break up rubble, but with

the systemic grounds management system of ‘mowers and blowers’ removing organic matter from schools, MEEN is exploring longer-term solutions.

The sharing of knowledge has proved fruitful, with eco-teams creating displays and running assemblies. One team held a meeting with the Head to share their learning, whilst four schools have delivered presentations at two of MEEN’s intergenerational conferences. With the help of the University of Manchester, MEEN has also produced a film capturing the first wave of the project. The film

highlights how the pupils’ experience, knowledge and understanding have inspired members of the community.

Responding to an environmental problem, such as soil impoverishment, adds yet another issue to the list of things to worry about. However, when pupils were asked for their response to George Monbiot’s declaration that there are only 60 years of good harvests left, the pupils insisted they need to learn about the problems because: “*We’re the ones that are going to have to deal with it, not you*”.

Discovering Nature is Child’s Play

This article by **Kabir Kaul** first appeared in the Autumn 2019 edition of *Environmental Education*. Kabir is a 13-year-old British Kashmiri birder, wildlife enthusiast, WeBS counter, conservationist and French hornist. He’s obsessed with London and its wild spaces.

I’m Kabir, a young wildlife enthusiast from North London. I have always been interested in nature, but only started exploring British wildlife about five years ago. I decided to look out of the window, and every time I looked harder, the more robins, sparrows, foxes, white-tailed bumblebees and brimstone butterflies I would see. I thought of my neighbourhood as an urban paradise, a place where people had the potential to connect and harmoniously coexist with the wildlife on their doorstep.



Kabir’s entry for the National Park City Wildlife Photo Competition: Image Kabir Kaul

I decided to try and make a difference over the following years by making a pond, putting out bird feeders and a bird bath, and planting more flowers and bushes for insects: this is one of the main reasons how I got into birding and wildlife watching. I thought I was the only person doing this, and felt alone: all I saw was people my age obsessed with the latest game on their smartphones and tablets. After joining organisations such as the BTO and the RSPB, I met

many people with similar interests, who also do their bit to ‘give nature a home’. Learning from others’ experiences, I sought to make a difference in young people’s lives, and to help them get involved and connected with nature.

School was the perfect place to start. With another wildlife enthusiast, and lots of support from my headmaster (who is a birder!), the school’s Wildlife Society was finally created in November last year. Meetings run every two weeks, and are based on a wide range of ways on how young people can get involved with nature, from work experiences on a farm to getting out and about to embrace the capital’s wild side. At the first meeting, there were only four people, and now there are seven!

Overall, this is a very effective and easy way of educating young people about the natural world, and this is one of the main ways you can get involved. However, while most children will be subconsciously thinking of nature after a presentation, there will be a few who have completely no interest: when this happens, persevere by engaging the audience: make the club more interactive with quizzes and activities. This has really helped me in the past. Furthermore, you can also lead an excursion to a nature reserve or open space, so young people can have a first-hand experience of being connected to the natural world. To enhance their experience, give them binoculars or insect-viewers, and let them explore their surroundings from a different angle. Start simple: get them to find different wild flowers, or different species of insects. Once they are interested, they will start discovering the natural world for themselves.

You can follow Kabir @KaulofthewildUK

Remembering Mrs Anne Kenrick MBE

It is with sadness that we record the death in 2020 of **Anne Kenrick** who had been a Vice President of the Association since 2012. In that year, and in memory of her late husband Hugh, she donated his entire charitable trust fund to benefit the work of NAEE. The Hugh Kenrick bursary scheme continues to enable teachers to get school classes outside of their immediate environment to visit specific West Midlands environmental education centres. To date nearly 6,000 children have benefitted from these funds. Bursaries are awarded to applicants who show that their visits will link to both the school curriculum and to the development of a wider environmental awareness across the school community.

Anne (affectionally known in NAEE circles as Mrs K) was Head Gardener at Winchester College before working as a landscape architect. She was associated with the National Council for the Conservation of Plants & Gardens, now called Plant Heritage. Closer to her home in Birmingham, she was invited to advise on the restoration of the 17th century gardens at Castle Bromwich Hall and became the first Chair of the Castle Bromwich Hall Gardens Trust. Here she met Sue Fenoughty who was the Advisory Teacher for Environmental Education in Birmingham, and an NAEE committee member. Their friendship lasted nearly 30 years and Sue has explained that the inspiration for the Hugh Kenrick Scheme has roots much earlier in Anne's experiences.

While visiting Kirstenbosch Botanic Gardens in South Africa, Anne encountered a wooden shack converted to a school room where local children were educated about the flora and fauna of this fertile area. This memory inspired her to establish a school room centre at Birmingham Botanic Gardens. She believed passionately that city-based children needed to be introduced to the joys of learning about, and caring for, our environmental heritage beyond the urban streets where many of their homes and schools were situated. When the Gardens educational base was threatened with closure, along with other environmental education centres funded by Birmingham City Council, she used her knowledge of the RHS campaign for school gardening and donated her husband's trust fund to NAEE.

Despite failing sight, she remained concerned that NAEE should be enabling young people to gain an

understanding of the importance of the environmental issues that face us today. Instead of presents for her 90th birthday she asked friends and relatives to buy gardening materials that NAEE then distributed to schools from the Martineau Gardens Centre. Thanks to the help of her son John she was able to read letters from children and reports from teachers after their Kenrick funded visits. Her appreciation of the joy and learning of the young was obvious. In 2015 she wrote for our journal that: "It is vitally important that we pass onto the next generations the responsibility to preserve and protect our environment and use the Earth's natural resources in a sustainable manner." Her personal vision, as well as her benevolence that became the Hugh Kenrick Bursary Scheme, is now her legacy.

A fuller version of this tribute can be found at:
tinyurl.com/y3uaztvn

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Remembering Professor David Bellamy

David Bellamy, who was NAEE President for many years, died in November 2019. He was a good fit with NAEE because of his interest in promoting environmental issues and educating (in the broadest sense) people about them, including through television (particularly ITV beginning in the late 1970s). He was ahead of his time in this given that so much TV programming about the natural world was just about natural history and wildlife filming; a lot of it still is. Bellamy was a larger than life figure who had an imposing and enthusiastic screen presence and he was a strong and effective advocate for botany in particular and for the wellbeing of nature more generally. He became a controversial figure in later years for a number of reasons. These included, the work that his consultancy did with multinationals to try to help improve their environmental performance, his vocal impatience with the policies of a number of environmental pressure groups, and an inexplicable entry into politics in 1997 for the Referendum Party. While he was wrong about anthropogenic climate change (he called it "a load of poppycock"), the Royal Geographical Society awarded him its Busk Medal in 2001 for his services to conservation research.

NAEE was pleased to have him as its President, and we salute all he did for botany, conservation and environmental education.