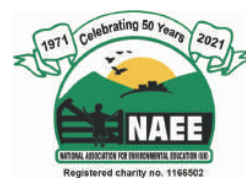


# National Association for Environmental Education (UK) Annual Review 2020 / 21



This is a report on the work of NAEE from August 2020 to July 2021. It is an account of key developments and the issues we faced, and contains reports on: finance and management, publications, 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 19 virus on the UK. Happily, all our core team remained 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, and our communication with members. There were also significant co-operation with other groups including the Council of British International Schools, the National Governance Association, the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, and Make Believe Ideas.

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. Our chair of trustees continues as a member of the Teach

the Future adult advisory group. During the year, the amount of traffic to the Association through our website and via email has continued to increase illustrating a greater national visibility for our work.

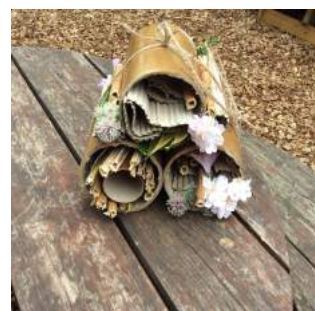
In other ways the impact of the virus on our work has once again been marked. These include the Kenrick school bursary scheme, and the work that we are funding with Leicester City Council and the Woodcraft Folk. As all these involve working with young people and schools, it could not be otherwise.

Fortunately, the Kenrick bursary scheme restarted in June. We expect to have it fully operational again in the Autumn and we're looking forward to celebrating the 6000<sup>th</sup> student to experience the environmental education that the bursaries enable.

Last year we noted with sadness the death of NAEE's most generous benefactor, Mrs Anne Kenrick. We were delighted that Anne managed to continue her support of the Association with a legacy which we have invested to provide funding for more bursaries.



The images shown here relate to environmental education activities that were funded by the Kenrick bursary scheme during 2020/21. All 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.*

## Evidence to the House of Commons EAC inquiry into Green Jobs

These are the key points in the *written evidence* that NAEE presented to the Environmental Audit Committee, arguing for all school leavers to have an essential understanding of key environmental issues:



1. **The** National Association for Environmental Education [NAEE] is the UK's oldest educational charity supporting schools and teachers to help young people understand the inter-relationship between humans and the rest of nature, and the responsibilities that we have towards the planet.
2. **Ours** is a long-standing and trusted voice and we have our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in September 2021.
3. **Uniquely**, NAEE produces a termly journal for practitioners and we work with like-minded organisations to promote real-world learning, innovative practice and sustainable school development. We publish blogs, articles, reviews, reports and position papers that are freely-available on our website – [naee.org.uk](http://naee.org.uk)
4. **We** welcome the investigation by the Environmental Audit Committee into [i] how green jobs can help tackle the expected rise in unemployment due to COVID-19 in a sustainable way, [ii] the jobs, skills and training needed to achieve the UK's longer-term climate and environmental ambitions, and [iii] what planning and work is taking place to meet these requirements.
5. **We** note the International Labour Organization definition of green jobs as “decent jobs in any economic sector which contribute to preserving, restoring and enhancing environmental quality”, but think that this misses an important point.
6. **Our** view is that all jobs should be seen as green jobs these days even though they do not have the specific ILO focus on preserving, restoring or enhancing environmental quality. We argue this because of [i] the environmental laws and regulation already in place that all employers and employees now face in a routine, everyday way; and [ii] because of the moral imperatives which underpin these.
7. **We** understand that there are particular circumstances that affect key industries, eg building regulations; air quality standards, and sewage disposal regulations (inadequate, and imperfectly-observed though many of these might be) which makes these particularly

important because of their wide-ranging social impacts if things go wrong.

8. **But** in the wider economy, *all* employers and employees are now faced with moral imperatives and regulatory obligations to save energy, reduce resource use, eliminate waste, protect and restore biodiversity, cut carbon use and footprints, support adaptation to climate change, etc. This applies across society from sole trader, to SME to conglomerate.
9. **Many** of these regulations require clear communication from employer to employee, and employee to customer. WWF (UK) agreed with this in its comments on the Dasgupta review of the economics of biodiversity. It said that businesses “must also help to educate and bring customers along with them, leading rather than waiting for customers to demand change”.
10. **We** agree, and this supports our call for all school leavers to have an essential understanding of key environmental issues. We say this because a knowledge and understanding of the essence of, and background to, all this cannot be the responsibility of every employer, just as essential numeracy and literacy are not. As with literacy and numeracy, it ought to be the responsibility of schools to work with students to develop appropriate attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills related to living and working as though nature mattered.
11. **Given** the above, there's a need for education programmes in schools to provide an understanding of the background to and the challenges of facing up to climate change and environmental problems. This can provide both a basis for living and working in today's world and a foundation for employers / FE / HE to build on. This is not in itself a vocational education, and is not just in support of the sort of green jobs as defined by the ILO; rather, like the development of numeracy and literacy, it is a necessary foundation for nature-respecting, positive and fulfilling lives as workers, consumers, citizens and social actors.
12. **It** is clear to us that our conviction that schools must have an essential role in helping to underpin our transition to a sustainable future is not shared by the Department for Education. We therefore urge the Committee to send a strong signal to DfE that it needs to align its curriculum framework and policies towards ensuring that young people are equipped to play a constructive and significant role in our transition to a sustainable society and world.

## Why Education has failed and what we need to do

**Justin Dillon**, NAEE President and Professor of Science and Environmental Education at the University of Exeter wrote this in a blog in March. Justin argues that the pandemic has provided a sad moment of opportunity to rethink our education system and the values and priorities that underpin it. He says that we need to seize the moment and advocate for a total rethink of what we teach, why we teach and how we teach.

On March 13, 2019, the day after MPs again voted down the Government's negotiated Brexit withdrawal agreement, Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond announced that he was commissioning a comprehensive independent review of the links between biodiversity and economic growth. The review was to be led by Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta, Emeritus Professor of Economics at the University of Cambridge.



The Dasgupta Review was published on February 2, 2021 and was unequivocal in its findings: "We have collectively failed to engage with Nature sustainably, to the extent that our demands far exceed its capacity to supply us with the goods and services we all rely on". The solution involves a massive shift in how we organise society. The report concludes by arguing for a transformation of our education systems towards one where "children from an early age are encouraged to try to understand the infinitely beautiful tapestry of processes and forms that is Nature" through environmental education. This section of the report owes much to the thinking of Mary Colwell, the writer and journalist who is behind the proposed GCSE in Natural History.

I find it hard to imagine that such a course will ever succeed. Even if GCSEs continue to exist – and I am doubtful that they will for much longer – Biology and Geography are so well-established that a Natural History GCSE is likely to be strangled at birth. Even if it survived, there's the problem of who would teach it?

So, what is the alternative? Environmental education is more than nature study and has been for as long as I can remember. I do recall it being a cross-curricular theme back in the heady, early days of the National Curriculum.

However, it soon vanished as national testing and league tables created a three-tier system with English, Mathematics and Science at the top table and cross-

curricular themes sorting through the scraps and the slops.

I would argue that the pandemic has provided a sad moment of opportunity.

There is a compelling argument that education has failed spectacularly. After years of schooling many of the population don't know how viruses work or how to protect themselves from their effects.

The government has had to pay for commercials explaining how to wash your hands, and far too many people do not know how to tell truth from lies. Over 140,000 people have died as a result of inadequate understanding on the part of the public, the media and politicians and that is in the UK alone.

**There is incontrovertible evidence that education has failed to equip people with the knowledge, skills and commitment necessary to address the challenges we face.**

While COVID-19 dominates our immediate and short-term thinking, climate change continues unabated. Here too, there is incontrovertible evidence that education has failed to equip people with the knowledge, skills and commitment necessary to address the challenges we face. Young people around the world have been taking to the streets in protest at the lack of action and the lack of adequate climate change education.

This situation is unsustainable. We need to rethink our education system and the values and priorities that underpin it. Never before has the public valued the environment and the outdoors more than it does now. Growing numbers of people appreciate what nature does for us and what we need to do for nature. We need to seize the moment and advocate for a total rethink of what we teach, why we teach and how we teach. It is as simple and as complicated as that.

.....

Justin can be contacted at: [J.S.Dillon@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:J.S.Dillon@exeter.ac.uk)



## Financial Summary

Because of the impact of the virus, there has been another underspend on this year's budget. 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, and we have reassured our partners that the funding is secure. The overall financial footing of the Association remains sound. Of particular note this year was the £21,000 donation from the legacy of our best-ever supporter and champion, Mrs Anne Kenrick. NAEE continues to be very appreciative of the wonderful generosity of the Kenrick family. We have invested the legacy and shall use the income to fund school bursaries. NB, the 20/21 income / expenditure data shown below exclude both legacy and investment figures.

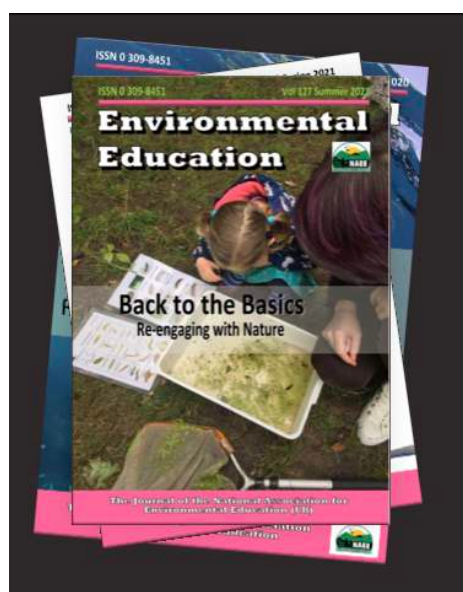
| 2020 / 21  |             | 2021 / 22  |             |
|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| Income     | Expenditure | Income     | Expenditure |
| £13,238.38 | £11,776.07  | £10,472.91 | £10,971.49  |

| 2020 / 21 Income                    | %  | 2020 / 21 Expenditure        | %  |
|-------------------------------------|----|------------------------------|----|
| Investments                         | 59 | Curriculum Support           | 32 |
| Membership                          | 20 | School Bursaries             | 43 |
| Donations                           | 5  | Networking and Collaboration | 3  |
| Publications, sales, royalties, etc | 4  | Core professional services   | 8  |
| Consultancy                         | 12 | Operating costs              | 14 |

78% 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.

## Environmental Education: NAEE's Journal

Our journal has been published continuously since 1971. Despite the pandemic, three volumes of the journal, *Environmental Education*, were published as usual.



**Vol 125** (Autumn 2020) focused on marine issues with features on shark and manta ray conservation, and ocean acidification and pollution. There were also articles on heritage and forest schools.

**Vol 126** (Spring 2021) was a print issue guest edited by Ruth Sapsed, the Director of Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination. Its featured articles focused on the importance of linking art and our natural world for the sake of children's learning.

**Vol 127** (Summer 2021) focused on re-engaging with nature: back to basics. There were articles on green literacy, rubbish campaigning, conservation education, archeoanimals, soil science and global learning.

Volume 127 is currently restricted to members; but previous journals are available at: [naee.org.uk/ee-journal](http://naee.org.uk/ee-journal). The next issue will have a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary theme.

## 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.

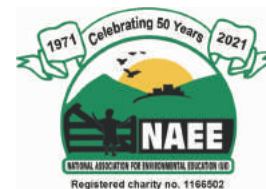
The ways in which these are normally realised are:

Hugh Kenrick bursaries for schools; publishing (journals and reports), web and social media outputs, and collaboration with other organisations.

The bulk of the week-by-week activity, which is the essence of what NAEE does, continues to be carried

out by the executive chair and a number of effectively-co-ordinated working groups, all of which enjoy efficient professional administration.

A new logo was commissioned to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of NAEE in 1971.



There were four meetings of the Trustee Board during the year, all by zoom. Attendance overall was 75%, and five trustees attended all the meetings. Graham Frost resigned as a trustee in June. There were three executive committee meetings, all by zoom.

An extensive review of the advice and support available to the executive chair was carried out during the year. This has resulted in a number of proposed changes. These will be discussed at the 2021 AGM in November.

### Trustees, Officers and Key Volunteers in 2020 / 21

#### Trustees

Justin Dillon (President)  
 Gabrielle Back  
 Tim Baker  
 Graham Frost (resigned 06 2021)  
 Nina Hatch (*ex officio*)  
 Elsa Lee (*ex officio*)  
 Paula Owens  
 Morgan Phillips  
 William Scott (Chair)

#### Elected Officers

Nina Hatch (Executive 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 |

### 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. Last year only 7 Kenrick grants could be taken up owing to school closures during the COVID-19 lockdown and for a long time it looked as if this year would see a similar number. In the end, 12 were awarded and taken up before the end of the Summer term.

The number of bursaries given since the start of the scheme is now 120, and the number of schools receiving is 90. Only 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. By the end of summer term 2021 the number of students benefitting from the scheme had reached 6,000. We shall be marking this with a special event at the Martineau Gardens in March 2022 with publicity, a fund-raising campaign and a report on the development of the Kenrick bursary scheme.

## Children need Nature; Nature needs Children

The [Cameron Bespolka Trust](#) is a charity that has been set up in Cameron's memory to inspire young people to love and appreciate nature. Cameron loved nature, especially birds. When young people experience nature, it gives them the opportunity to learn and fall in love with it. What do we do with the things we love? We protect them. Nature-loving children almost always grow into nature-loving adults, helping to build a greener future for all. How does the trust engage young people with nature?



Cameron Bespolka was a young naturalist who was filled with a passion for wildlife. Image: the Cameron Bespolka Trust

By creating opportunities involving conservation work and research, organising and sponsoring events for teenagers to connect with the outdoors and working closely with partners. The trust hopes to partner with schools and educational institutions in future to offer nature projects. So far, the trust has supported or partnered with BTO Young Leaders, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Bird Event, WildArt Competition 2020, CJ Wildlife, BTO Camp, New Forest Wildlife Camp 2020 and many more...

I first heard of the trust through social media and was inspired by the other young ambassadors. Immediately I knew that I wanted to get involved. The trust only has 12 ambassadors at any one time so I knew it would be a tricky role to get but I fired off an email regardless. Over the past year, I have been volunteering with Essex Wildlife Trust's education team, helping to lead forest school and young carer sessions both in schools and at Wildlife Trust centres.

I love my volunteer work and, when it came to applying for the young ambassador role, I thought that the skills and experience gained would be perfect for the Cameron Bespolka Trust. In May, I was invited to join the team of young ambassadors and I am very much looking forward to the coming year working alongside my peers. In early August, the other young ambassadors and I arranged to meet up in the New Forest and camp for a night – unfortunately, this was cancelled due to the recent Covid-19 situation, but it will likely be rearranged.

At the moment, the trust is working on an exciting project, in partnership with RSPB, to renovate a derelict cottage deep in the middle of RSPB's new reserve Franchises Lodge, in the New Forest. Planning permission was granted in December 2019 and the aim is to create a unique residential educational facility that will provide a base from which small groups of young people will be able to have immersive experiences with nature – it will be called 'Cameron's Cottage'. Personally, I cannot wait to visit.

Another fantastic initiative is 'Cameron's Benches'. Benches have been placed globally in memory of Cameron, each in stunning natural spots that are allowing people to sit and ponder the beauty of nature. In my opinion, the benches also encourage an amount of self-reflection, enabling people to reflect on their own mortality and the importance of living in the present. The bench locations are on the website and, if you happen to sit on one, the trust would love to receive a photo of you on one of the benches; details are on the website.



'Cameron's Cottage'. Image: the Cameron Bespolka Trust

As well as the trust's main projects, many of the young ambassadors have individual projects that they are working on – supported by the trust. These projects cannot be disclosed here but keep an eye on the trust's website and social media. So far, my journey with the Cameron Bespolka Trust has been very special and I am honoured to be able to contribute to such a wonderful charity. From my work with the trust and beyond, I have seen first-hand that children need nature and nature needs children.

.....

**Andrew Millham** is studying for an Environmental Science degree. He is an Essex Wildlife Trust education team volunteer, a media officer for Reserva, and a young ambassador for the Cameron Bespolka Trust. He is a nature writer, with work published in Bird Watching, Scotland Magazine, Essex Life, RHS The Garden, and Scottish Field. Andrew tweets [@cameron\\_b\\_trust](#) and his Instagram account is: [cameronbespolkatrust](#)

## Examples of Partnership

NAEE collaborated with a range of organisations during the year. For example:

### The NGA

We completed our work with the National [school] Governance Association to help it write guidance on environment and sustainability issues for the governing bodies of schools in England. There were two outcomes:



The first was the NGA Guidance: [Developing a Wholeschool approach to Environmental Sustainability](#). This encourages governing boards to influence a whole school approach to environmental sustainability, both by adopting it as a core value and by making it a key element of their strategy.

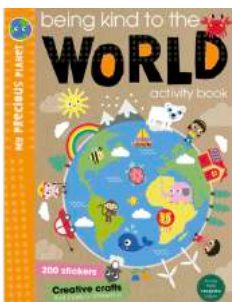
The NGA's guidance included a reference to the more detailed document written by NAEE: [Developing Sustainability](#). This explores how governing boards can help evaluate and develop their school's approaches to environmental sustainability, posing questions that they might ask about what their school is doing.

NAEE's resource is divided into four sections following the established **Four Cs** model:

- Curriculum:** teaching and learning
- Campus:** buildings, grounds and budget
- Community:** inside and out
- Culture:** caring and respect

The four sections set out 26 questions that governing boards might ask themselves about their school. These all begin: "*To what extent does your school ...*" and are followed by a one example of practices that the question might explore. This is in a "*If so, does it ...*" form.

### Make Believe Ideas



We worked with publisher [Make Believe Ideas](#) on their latest book series: *My Precious Planet*. We helped them develop two activity books for young children: *Helping save our animals* and *Being kind to the world*.

### COBIS

Our work with the Council of Overseas British International Schools [COBIS] on its Eco-film award continues. In 2021, we judged 38 videos made by young people across the world and determined winner and runner-up awards in the key stages 1/2 and 3-5 categories.



What characterised these entries was a coherent story clearly told about an innovative creative student project that made a change to the operation of the school, and which was well told in an engaging way with students to the fore. These stories were also authentic in that they were obviously about the students telling their story in appropriate ways for their setting and age. 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.

This is an extract from our final report:

"It was good to have insights into how schools from across the world are dealing in positive ways with environmental issues, and to listen to the passionate and knowledgeable young people in the videos. This year, the credits shown at the end of the films better celebrated the roles of those behind the camera. We appreciated the creativity and innovation shown by many of the projects, along with the range of approaches taken to film-making. There were splendid examples of smart video-graphic techniques and the very effective use of music. As ever, understated wit was an effective communications tool. Recycling was again a popular theme, with the contemporary problem of our use of plastics particularly prominent. The more successful accounts, however, went beyond the mechanics of collecting, disposing and re-using materials to have a long-term impact on both sustainability and on learning.

As last year, we saw the effective use of statistics to illustrate issues and contextualise outcomes, and there was evidence of multi-age working and whole-school involvement, and links between the school and the wider community in what was being attempted."

We have agreed to work with COBIS again in 2021/22.

## Exploring Environmental Justice Education: learning to fight for our future

*“You must not gamble your children’s future on the flip of a coin. Instead, you must unite behind the science. You must take action. You must do the im-possible. Because giving up can never ever be an option”.*

Our current climate crisis and the importance of environmental justice education are highlighted in this short quote from Greta Thunberg, speaking at the US congress in 2019<sup>[1]</sup>. Now more than ever, students and young people are at the forefront of a new age of environmentalism.

Originating in the early 1980s, the environmental justice movement in the US was primarily addressing concerns over the links between environmental risks and minority and low-income populations. In 1982, the spark ignited from Warren County, North Carolina with a protest by a small African American community which was designated a home for hazardous waste landfill. This catalysed national protest<sup>[2]</sup>.



Environmental injustice has been actively researched since the late 1990s in the UK. Studies reveal a strong link between air pollution and deprivation, particularly harmful for children<sup>[3]</sup>. The Aarhus Convention, adopted in 1998, was a top-down response to intergovernmental agreements on human rights, seen as a mechanism for achieving environmental sustainability and justice in Europe<sup>[4]</sup>.

Distributional (in)justice is a key component in environmental justice. In the UK, areas that have historically had large manufacturing or mining industries such as Birmingham and Middlesbrough, hold some of England’s most deprived areas. Blackpool alone holds eight out of the ten most deprived neighbourhoods in the country<sup>[5]</sup>. In London, over 90% of polluting factories are in areas with below average income<sup>[6]</sup>.



There is considerable procedural injustice throughout the US and UK, meaning there is a consistent lack of fairness and transparency in decision-making. This

evolves through issues such as discrimination, where local communities are deliberately excluded from governmental decisions. Whether it be intentional or structural discrimination, where a community is chosen because it is the easiest or cheapest place to locate burden, the fight to secure environmental justice is ongoing<sup>[7]</sup>. For example, in 2009, Defra revealed that areas with large ethnic minority populations experience PM10 concentration at 12-29% above that of predominantly White British areas<sup>[8]</sup>.

Environmental justice education is a fundamental piece in building a future generation who understand the importance of protecting our fragile ecosystems. The decisions we make are dependent on our values. We have seen how educated young people have shaped environmental change and we must continue to help develop these values. A deep, critical understanding of the environment would not only help students but inspire them to become ‘environmental citizens’ within their own communities<sup>[9]</sup>.

Environmental justice presents many challenges and has complex solutions. Policymakers need to recognise and address inequalities, understanding the long-term impacts on deprived areas. Communities need to gain citizen power and stand up for their human rights. Globally, we need to prioritise the cost of neglecting the environment rather than sacrificing it for short-term economic gain.

Educators have a responsibility to nurture a new age of learners and to encourage the importance of participation and local action in this new era. They need to push for environmental justice, especially in the many areas suffering disproportionately and inspire change there. Students have the burden of the future, repairing the damage of decades of environmental abuse.

.....

**Rebecca Newman** is a member of NAEF’s blog team and can be contacted at: [rebecca2001newman@gmail.com](mailto:rebecca2001newman@gmail.com)

This article was published as a blog in April. Footnotes and references can be found [here](#).

A follow-up to Rebecca’s post was also published that month. It was an edited and updated version of the chapter on environmental justice that Bill Scott and Paul Vare wrote in their 2018 book: *[The World we’ll Leave behind: grasping the sustainability challenge](#)*.



## Why didn't I learn about this at School?

My time working as a professional in education is short but my time as a learner spans the whole of my 25 years of life. There is one question that regularly reoccurs when I learn something new – ‘why didn't I learn about this in school?’

### **Environmental education is an ideal approach to implement within this curriculum**

Educational approaches are constantly evolving. Our understanding of learning and brain function is continually updated. Why then, is the structure of an educational setting roughly the same as fifty years ago? The main concern I find with education, however, is that the outcome of schooling is to place a child into a nicely shaped box that fits with society's norms and workplace expectations.

A refreshing approach to education is the upcoming Welsh 2022 curriculum, putting more emphasis on expression and originality, teacher autonomy and young person creativity. It is a move away from regimented, tick-box, success criteria modelling, allowing students and teachers to work collaboratively towards exciting outcomes.

Environmental education is an ideal approach to implement within this curriculum. Now, more than ever, the environment is a topic that should be central to educational processes. Young people, the next generation, need to be more adapted to, and aware of, changing environment and the vital role sustainability will play in providing solutions to the climate, biodiversity and ecological issues facing humanity.

### **A refreshing approach to education is the upcoming Welsh 2022 curriculum, putting more emphasis on expression and originality, teacher autonomy and young person creativity.**

Environmental education and/or education for sustainable development is a logical evolutionary change for education systems. It is this logic that motivated me to write an environmental education framework – a whole school, project-based approach, immersing young people in contemporary issues and solutions both local and global. The framework is structured on a termly basis with a different project relating to the Sustainable Development Goals, climate change, climate awareness, active citizenship and global citizenship, beginning in Reception through to Year 11.

A sustainable society is the way the world is headed. Business, government and citizens have all been changing their behaviours, whether it is using a bag for life or revolutionising the energy sector, sustainability is part of our lives and as far as I can tell it is here to stay. The importance of sustainability,

now more than ever, cannot be underestimated. A planet 4°C warmer than pre-industrial levels at the end of the century is the reality we face if we don't start investing heavily in a green energy sector. The IPCC has stated that 2% of global GDP is what is needed as investment in sustainable and renewable infrastructure to keep warming below 1.5°C (a manageable level). These figures have been criticised as unachievable, whilst at the same time the United States Federal Reserve has invested 20% of its annual GDP on economic recovery from the Covid-19 Pandemic. Furthermore, a warmer planet means sea level rise that would be a catastrophe for countries such as Puerto Rico and especially Bangladesh which will lose up to two thirds of its land mass. Bangladesh's 400 million population would massively be impacted, creating innumerable numbers of climate refugees. All this chaos and we haven't even discussed the extreme loss of biodiversity – what Sir David Attenborough calls the sixth mass extinction.

### **Wales is making a positive, progressive evolution of its curriculum; however, environmental education needs to be a central theme.**

This all sounds scary, but it will be a lot scarier if people aren't educated about the realities. This is why environmental education is so imperative. Teaching the message of sustainability is vital in giving young people the tools and knowledge they need to enter a world of climate instability. Done effectively, environmental education might lead to a new generation of active and engaged citizens, fighting for their rights to a sustainable future, and it could mean that people will be conscious of the realities of society and the Earth. It could also mean that people will take notice of the policies politicians are placing on sustainability when they vote, and that young people are better prepared for the inevitable shifting of the economy towards green jobs.

Environmental education in schools is about giving young people an awareness and a preparedness of the world they are entering, which is why schools should be doing more of it. Wales is making a positive, progressive evolution of its curriculum; however, within it environmental education needs to be a central theme.

.....

**Tom Davies** co-ordinated NAEE's Facebook pages this year. This by was posted as a blog last October.

Tom can be contacted at: [tom.davies80@gmail.com](mailto:tom.davies80@gmail.com)

## Making Films about Wildlife & Conservation

I am lucky enough to have grown up surrounded by wildlife, thanks to my Dad rewilding what used to be an old farmstead. Whilst I have always been fascinated by the biodiversity that we have at home, it is only more recently that I have begun to appreciate and respect it on a whole new level. Learning about the natural world in school and now in my biology degree, I am increasingly realising the extent to which our landscape is so deprived of its native wildlife. Our country's ecosystems and the species within them are now struggling more than ever, and I aim to play an active role in the reversal of this situation.

Having seen first-hand how processes like rewilding can so significantly benefit biodiversity and the health of our ecosystems, I feel not only obliged but also excited to help others realise this too. It is through my videos that I have chosen to portray this excitement. I use YouTube to share information about our planet's incredible wildlife and what people can do on an individual level to help save it. There are, of course, many wildlife films and filmmakers out there already, and they all do a fantastic job of telling us about the biodiversity that we have here on Earth. Sometimes, they may even mention that it's in trouble. However, I feel that there is a huge gap that needs filling. Wildlife films and television should tell us more about what we can do to help save endangered species, ecosystems, and habitats. This, as well as my passion for learning about the natural world, is the main reason for creating my videos.

### The video-making process

The first step is deciding the topic of the video. I currently have a long list of things that I want to cover, but the main feature of my YouTube channel so far has been my 'Britain's Rarest' series. This is a series in which I cover some of the UK's most beautiful, but also most threatened species, and what people can do to help protect them. The latest episode [at the time of writing – 6 June 2020] was about Hazel Dormice. So, once I had decided on this species, the next step was researching it.

My 'Britain's Rarest' videos follow a set format: [i] Facts about the species; [ii] How to identify it; [iii] Where to find it; [v] Why it is under threat; [vi] Why you should help it; and [vii] How you can help it.

So, I wrote a rough script and plan to the video by combining my pre-existing knowledge about Hazel Dormice with what I could find online. My online information always comes from reliable sources like the Wildlife Trusts, Woodland Trust, People's Trust for Endangered Species, and other well-known conservation groups. The focus is often on the key player in the conservation of the given species. So, using my Grey Long-Eared Bats video as an example, I spoke to the 'Back from the Brink' Project Officer to

gain the most up-to-date information for the video.

Once I know what I'm going to say, I get outside and film it! I have only recently transitioned from filming inside to filming outside. I think that being outdoors makes my content much more engaging. It is also a lot more consistent with the wildlife theme than the inside of my Dad's shed – which was the original filming location!

Good editing is crucial, as this can hugely impact how engaging the video is. My editing is all self-taught, and I try to include something new in every video, no matter how small, to ensure that I keep improving.

### The challenges of creating videos

For me, the most challenging part is making a video engaging. Nowadays, there is so much information out there that it's unlikely I'm saying much that hasn't been said before. However, it's the way in which this information is put across that can determine its impact on people. Many individuals, of my generation especially, don't seem to appreciate or respect the natural world in the same way that I do. This isn't necessarily their fault, as most of us haven't grown up in a society that sees the environment as a priority. However, I do believe that this mindset can be changed; we just have to approach it correctly. Making my videos engaging to young people – arguably the most important generation to target – is, therefore, my biggest challenge. YouTube videos often only require short attention spans, and so it can be difficult to try and put across important facts without losing people's interest. This is something which I feel myself becoming better at, and if just one of my videos makes a difference to the way that someone thinks about the environment, then I have at least achieved something. (My goals are, however, a lot bigger than that!)

### Thoughts for the future

Whether it is a career in wildlife film, research, or something else, my main aim is to have a lasting impact in the field of conservation. Right now, I am doing what I can to help out by volunteering and making YouTube videos, through which I hope to increase engagement with and appreciation for the natural world.

.....

**Alex Collins** is a 19-year-old conservationist from Macclesfield Forest, Cheshire. He is studying Biological Sciences at the University of Bristol, and volunteers for a number of organisations including the Badger Trust, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, Reserva: The Youth Land Trust, Wild Ideas and Lower Moss Wood Wildlife Hospital. You can contact Alex at [alexcollinswac@gmail.com](mailto:alexcollinswac@gmail.com) or through his YouTube channel: [youtube.com/alexcollinswac](https://www.youtube.com/alexcollinswac)

## Mud and Good Companionship

The educators at Walkergate Early Years Centre in Newcastle had been venturing into a woodland pre-school one recent spring and mud had been a big feature. The ‘mud-ludder’ children jump and squelch in it, getting stuck, feeling it, moulding it, churning it, finding worms.

This is all part of the lovely mix of exploring, climbing, collecting, and making dens. Sticks can be living, dead, dry, wet, brittle, rotten, strong, long, for helping, carrying, building, sticks with fungus on, sociable sticks, power sticks. They are limbs from the trees the children were playing amongst, in the mud, down where the mud monster scared and fascinated them and was their friend. The leaves and pine-cones, feathers, all with their insistent tales of mystery and imagination, are waiting to be picked up, interpreted, re-told, re-invented, with a deftness of curiosity that connected children to one another and with the world all around them.

Back at nursery, lucky children, they explore again inside and outside with clay, soil, compost, in the natural and vibrant ways of exploration and exchange they’d naturally moved with in the woods. Why lucky? They had good companions, who made time and space for them, their interests and the mud.

It isn’t always the case that adults in education are ready, willing and able to see and respond to the simple enthusiasm of their children.

Our children spend too much time inside, separated from the world, but nevertheless the domestic shelter of the classroom can be a good place, so long as it relates to the primary experience and stuff of the world. Space outside, whether woodland or nursery garden, seems to be the place for relationships, exchange, delving and exploration, it is after all our elemental home. The inside space, the classroom, seems more the place of reflection, recall and imagination, alongside the sensory encounter with materials. Here materials have a life away from their home, in this artificial, domestic, studio space.

Working with elemental materials reduces our dangerous adult cultural separateness from the living, sentient world and brings the possibility of a better understanding and alignment in our children. There is an inborn sense of wonder; an easy, rewarding sense to nurture. This is not simply a matter of stuff, it is a matter of speed and intent. Tasks, goals and achievement need repetitiveness, efficient ways of doing things, lowest-common-denominator simplicity.

Enquiry needs fascination and engagement; a different understanding of time. The point is not to get somewhere else, but to be exactly where you are, switching on senses, thoughts and feelings. To be

good companions with children, we need to rekindle, to cultivate in ourselves, the habit of walking in the unknown – and listening. Carlina Rinaldi<sup>28</sup> refers to a pedagogy of listening: listening not to what we expect or even seek, but to what is, what we see; to listen to ourselves listening.

Sometimes we are encouraged to ‘think outside the box’ but can we more courageously learn to be aware that the box itself is a figment of our imagining: it does not really exist at all anyway. Step out of the box, walk a few paces, turn around – pam!: the box simply isn’t there any more. Can we notice the complexities of the forest instead; learn to live and be amongst the trees?

Can we ‘good companions’ learn to cultivate this being in complexity? Can we encourage children’s natural sense of enquiry in which thought, feelings and senses are passionately engaged? We talk of ‘researching the children who are researching the world’. We need to be ready and to make our settings ready for their researchfulness.

We need to learn to get off the beaten path, to walk off the track and into the woods. It took me years to walk off the track, to remember, to decide to let my feet follow inclination, to dare. But once you walk into the woods, wait and let the woods come to you. It is not a matter of being lost but of being there, being in uncertainty. I do not mean being tremulous, lost, indecisive, fearful: it is being ready to listen well, without needing to explain or dissect, to be ‘in tune’, so that senses naturally attune to the patterns, the orders, intricacies and relationships of the world. We are ourselves, animated, vibrant, rhythmic, perceiving and related to other animated, vibrant, rhythmic, people around us.

I think this is something of the vital ‘sense of wonder’ of which Rachel Carson writes so eloquently, and which we cannot have if we separate ourselves from sticks, leaves, feathers, shells, clay, water, wood, wool, stones ...or from air, mountains, woods, rivers, fields, seas.

There are simple, humane starting points from which to imagine and create educative spaces in which children can explore and learn in joyful, vibrant, meaningful ways. If we choose, we can focus on making places which speak of the ‘pulsing of life’: places which celebrate our encounters with the stuff of the world.

.....

**Robin Duckett** is Director of [sightlines-initiative.com](http://sightlines-initiative.com) following ten years as a nursery teacher. He is at home in sun and rain, woods and mountains.

## Ten Green Blogs



offers a selection of UK [Green Blogs](#). The top 5

for 2020 are listed below with a commentary by Vuelio (not NAEF).



Wendy Graham's Moral Fibres stays at the top when it comes to all things green, sharing 'sustainable living that's hip, not hippie'. Since 2013, Wendy has been helping those wanting to go green across all areas of their lives, not just in the kitchen or garden. The blog's sections for living sustainably include Life & Style, Food & Drink, Home & Garden, Families, Travel and Resources. 'I want to show that sustainable living can be part of everyone's daily life, whether you wear sandals or prefer a more substantial footwear – Moral Fibres is never preachy, nor judgmental'. It's not always easy being green (as a wise frog once said), but our judgement? This blog will certainly make it a lot easier.



Reporting on the developed and undeveloped world is Jeremy Williams, who originally launched The Earthbound Report as Make Wealth History. Created to work in tandem with the Make Poverty History campaign, Jeremy's blog now covers a variety of subjects for earthbound folks who want to make the world a better place for everyone living here – recent posts focus on low carbon greenhouse farming, recyclable solar panels, rebuilding reefs and turning coal mines into energy storage, and lessons learned during lockdown. And if you'd like to learn more, there's Jeremy's round-up of facts he's found across the web in 'What we learned this week'.



Sian Conway believes ethical business is something worth spending time on. Having left the corporate marketing world to bring ethical change to big business, Sian shares her passion for sustainability on the #EthicalHour blog, hoping to contribute to building 'a future where business is a powerful force for good'. Split into sections on Ethical Business, Ethical Living and Sustainability, content aims to

'start conversations that matter – making ethical and sustainable living easier and more accessible, and helping good businesses grow'. Articles take in topics like changemakers, policy, shopping with intention and the problems with palm oil – if you want to help make change, go join the conversation.



Welcoming eco-friendly fans into The Green Familia is blogger Brenda Cuby, who advises families on shopping greener. Family extends to pets (as it should) here, with content on going greener with Babies & Toddlers, Kids & Teens, Grown Ups AND co-habiting canines/cats/other cuties (healthy hemp inspired wellness treats are a good investment for the furry members of the fam – pro tip). Green giving goes right along with green living at The Green Familia and if you're not sure what's worth having when it comes to making sustainable purchases, Brenda's Reviews & Views section will point you in the right direction.



If recent times have made you curious enough about environmental issues to forgo fast fashion, convenient but chemical-filled food and gems that have been unsustainably sourced, find out how with Curiously Conscious. Started by Besma Whayeb in 2014, the blog provides a guide for making changes during the day to day. Beauty, Fashion, Home, Life and Travel feature, filled with advice on caring for your clothes to make them last longer, shopping for vintage/upcycled fashion, making plastic-free swaps, cooking with eco pots and pans and banking ethically. 'Sustainability in a pandemic: is it necessary?' – Besma says yes, and taking a look through her blog will convince you to keep curious, both during lockdown and beyond.



There are 5 more in this top 10 and all are educational one way or another.

There are other top 10s as well covering, for example, beer, fashion, parenting, education, charity, running, beauty, football, technology, gardening, pets, fashion, PR, etc, etc.

You'll have your own preferred green blogs, why not tell us about them, or about your favourite environmental education blogs.