Written Submission from YouthLink Scotland

Draft Climate Change Plan

YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work. We are a membership organisation, representing over 100 regional and national youth organisations from both the voluntary and statutory sectors. Our vision is of a nation which values its young people and their contribution to society, where young people are supported to achieve their potential. Through engaging in youth work, young people are more resilient, optimistic for the future, consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control.

Our sector has a workforce in excess of 75,000 – including over 70,000 adult volunteers. We reach in excess of 380,000 young people in youth work opportunities each week. Youth Work has three essential and definitive features:

- Young people choose to participate
- Youth work must build from where young people are
- Youth work recognises the young person and the youth worker as partners in a learning process

Comments

Any cross-community plan that aims to deliver transformational climate change action must include education as a key component. Environmental sustainability is intrinsically linked with social justice, human rights, global citizenship and democratic participation. Sustainable development education must be integrated into all forms of learning across people’s lives, including through informal learning such as youth work. Using the Learning for Sustainability model is shown to increase attainment and have positive mental and physical health benefits.¹

Individual behaviours cannot be changed without wide-spread, organised and comprehensive sustainable development education. Young people should be informed about the impact of their individual behaviours, as well as being prepared for future employability in low carbon industries.

It would be a missed opportunity not to link this plan with overarching frameworks like the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Scotland was one of the first nations to accept the SDGs and pledge to work towards them, home and away. The SDGs are also aligned with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. All of the SDGs are relevant to children and young people, and fundamental children's rights cannot be realised without the success of the SDGs. Furthermore, children and young people have the right to have a say in all matters affecting them. This includes tackling climate change.

Case Studies

Through youth work, young people are supported to take local and global action to challenge climate change and live more sustainably. The following examples highlight the different

¹ Education Scotland, Outdoor Learning: Practical guidance, ideas and support for teachers and practitioners in Scotland, p. 8-10
ways in which young people are currently active in their communities to tackle climate change.

The Junior Climate Challenge Fund has been an enabling factor for many youth work projects, awarding £913,333 to youth-led projects since its inception. Youth work awards such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award; Outbound Trust Skills for Life Award and the John Muir Award include environmental elements through activities such as expeditions.

Tweeddale Youth Action (TYA) are leading the way for youth sustainability projects, including their Food Punks project, supporting young people to learn more about food and how to prepare it. TYA also run up-cycling projects, bike repair workshops, and clothing exchanges.

Young people have taken part in the UK-wide Dragon Finder initiative. Young people in East Ayrshire have been working on a variety of projects in Dean Castle Country Park aimed at developing the park for future generations and encouraging biodiversity and sustainability in the park.

**Recommendations**

YouthLink Scotland recommends that lifelong and life wide sustainable development education is included in the Climate Change Plan as a key enabler. We also recommend the Scottish Government works directly with children and young people to ensure their views are taken into account in relation to climate change.

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