

INTRODUCTION

- 1 This paper presents the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy for Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC), placing it in the wider policy framework. It describes existing HEFCW activity in relation to ESDGC and presents new responsibilities for the Council following the publication of the Welsh Assembly's Strategy for Action, reflected in HEFCW's remit letter for 2007-08. The paper invites the Council to note how these responsibilities will be taken forward.

BACKGROUND

- 2 The Assembly Government published its document *Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship – a Strategy for Action* on 19 September 2006. Chapter 6, the HE Sector, is attached at **Annex 1**. This Strategy was produced as a result of a consultation period that took place between September and December 2005, to which both HEFCW and individual HEIs responded.

THE POLICY CONTEXT

- 3 The ESDGC Strategy sits within the wider framework of United Nations, UK Government and Welsh Assembly Government policy as described below. Relevant parallel Welsh Assembly policies are also described.

UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD)

- 4 In December 2002, the period 2005-2014 was adopted by the United Nations as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, with UNESCO designated as the lead agency for the promotion of the Decade. The overall goal is to "integrate the values inherent in sustainable development into all aspects of learning in order to encourage changes in behaviour that allow for a more sustainable and just society for all". There are four main objectives, to:
 - i) facilitate networking, linkages, exchange and interaction among stakeholders in ESD;
 - ii) foster and increased quality of teaching and learning in ESD;
 - iii) help countries make progress towards and attain Millennium Development Goals [8 actions agreed worldwide to meet the needs of the world's poorest] through ESD efforts;
 - iv) provide countries with new opportunities to incorporate ESD into education reform efforts.

UK Government policy

- 5 The UK Government's Sustainable Development Strategy *Securing the Future* (published March 2005) set out a single objective:
 - *The goal of sustainable development is to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generations.*

- 6 This objective is underpinned by a framework of principles covering the whole of the UK, with a UK-wide set of indicators. The Welsh Assembly Government's Sustainable Development Action Plan (paras 7-8 refer) sits beneath this framework.

Welsh Assembly Government policy: WAG Sustainable Development Action Plan

- 7 In 1998 under the Government of Wales Act, the National Assembly for Wales assumed a responsibility for sustainable development that was unique for an elected body in the UK. Wales is reported to be one of only three countries in the world with a statutory commitment to promote sustainable development. The Assembly's Sustainable Development Scheme, *A Sustainable Wales - Learning to Live Differently*, was adopted in November 2000, and was concerned with better decision-making for sustainable development, with the desire to mainstream the sustainable development agenda within the Assembly Government and ASPBs.
- 8 In November 2004, the Assembly published its overarching *Sustainable Development Action Plan 2004 – 2007*. The document contained ten top commitments, including the production of a strategy for action that would cover the 3-19, youth, learning and skills, higher education and lifelong learning sectors in Wales. The Assembly tasked its newly merged Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) Advisory Panel to draw up this action plan, in the first instance as a document for consultation. HEFCW responded to this consultation in some detail; individual HEIs also responded.

Parallel Assembly Government policies

Wales Spatial Plan (November 2004)

- 9 The Wales Spatial Plan sits alongside *Wales: A Better Country* and the *Sustainable Development Scheme and Action Plan* as one of the Assembly's high level strategic guidance documents. The Plan sets an agenda for the sustainable futures of the communities and the regions of Wales, promising to place the core values of sustainable development at the forefront of decision making and the coordination of investment.

A Science Policy for Wales (November 2006)

- 10 Recognising its sustainable development ambitions and duties, the Assembly Government has described three key priorities within its *Science Policy for Wales*: Health, Low Carbon Economy; and Enabling Sustained Social and Economic Renewal.

Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship – A Strategy for Action

- 11 As a result of consultation, the Welsh Assembly Government published its Strategy for Action in September 2006. The Strategy seeks to prescribe an agenda across all of Welsh education towards delivering the Assembly Government's commitment, as the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills says in her Foreword, to ensure that the principles of ESDGC are built into every aspect of our day to day life. Its aim is to help the people of Wales understand the issues, gain the skills to address the challenges, achieve something tangible, and ensure a positive future for generations to come.

REMIT LETTER 2007-08

- 12 Our current remit letter acknowledges the publication of the new ESDGC Strategy for Action, recognising that "climate change is a challenge for every part of the Assembly Government". In this context we are required to work with the Assembly's newly appointed *ESDGC Champion* (para 23 refers) to take action on the relevant recommendations in the *ESDGC action plan* (paras 19, 20 and Annex 2 refer), and to submit a report on actions taken and planned by the end of March 2008.

CURRENT HEFCW COMMITMENTS

- 13 In terms of existing activity, HEFCW's Corporate Plan already commits us to engage with the sustainable development agenda:
- By 2010 HEFCW "will have enabled the sector to embed sustainability in its overall strategic planning to ensure that in all aspects of their activities HEIs deliver sustainable impacts, as measured by evidence provided in the various plans requested from HEIs by the Council".
- 14 In 2006, in anticipation of the publication of the ESDGC action plan, we asked HEIs to provide a separate section within their Strategic Plans to cover their activities in relation to ESDGC. This information was provided by individual HEIs to a greater or lesser extent, but nonetheless yielded some useful information about the range of activities across the sector (mostly in relation to environmental / estates-related activity; very little on curriculum-related activity).

Improving Environmental Performance within the Higher Education Sector

- 15 In March 2005 the National Audit Office Wales published a report on Energy and Water Management in the higher education sector. We have adopted a systematic approach in responding to the report's recommendations, focusing on raising the profile of energy management within institutions and supporting energy managers in developing the service they provide. One specific action was the establishment of a partnership with the Carbon Trust who, together with HEFCW, have provided over £100k for the development of bespoke projects to improve energy and water management (HEFCW/05/CE4, 1 July 2005, reports). This includes work to ensure all institutions have a current energy survey in place supported by an appropriate energy policy. The funding has also been used to provide bespoke technical advice to institutions on specific technical issues, and for the development of additional guidance on this subject to be included within the Estates Manual.
- 16 In addition, funding of £4m has been allocated (£3m funding from Reaching Higher capital fund and £1m from additional capital in 2006/07) for the development of a unique coordinated approach to automated targeting and monitoring of energy and water consumption across the HE sector (HEFCW/06/CE8, 7 December 2006, reports). This project will ensure that each institution has an automated system of submeters capable of recording half-hour consumption data, to be relayed to a bureau service which will record and analyse the data received. This will enable meaningful comparisons to be made across the sector and further develop benchmarking as suggested within the Audit Office report.

HEFCW as an organisation

- 17 HEFCW has committed to a number of strategic and specific actions that will improve our own environmental impact. In particular, we have committed to achieve level 2 accreditation under the *Green Dragon Environmental Management Scheme*, and have developed an environmental audit and action plan that identifies a number of key areas where improvements in environmental performance can be made.
- 18 HEFCW has recently decided to adopt the Value Wales Sustainable Procurement Tool. This will ensure that future purchasing reflects and minimises negative environmental impacts through developing environmental awareness with suppliers and assessing environmental consequences as a core element of future purchasing.

ESDGC STRATEGY FOR ACTION: OVERARCHING, PRIORITY AND SUPPLEMENTARY ACTIONS

- 19 The ESDGC Strategy for Action covers the following education sectors: school, youth, further education and work based learning, higher education, adult and continuing education. The document begins by presenting a number of overarching actions of

relevance to all sectors. Chapter 6 presents the priority and supplementary actions for the higher education sector and for HEFCW in particular. There are also a number of additional actions identified for HEIs in both the School (eg in relation to ITT providers) and Youth sector chapters.

- 20 The overarching actions and those allocated in Chapter 6 to HEFCW/HEIs are set out in **Annex 2**, together with a commentary on how we propose to take them forward. Where our view is that no action is required, either because actions are subsumed within others, or because a role for HEFCW is unrealistic or impossible to define, this is also noted.
- 21 In January 2007, officers met with the newly appointed ESDGC Champion for Wales to discuss the implications of the action plan for HEFCW and the HE sector in Wales. Officers' commentary against the actions listed in Annex 2 reflects these discussions. The possibility of WAG funding being made available in support of a number of these actions is also highlighted in para 25 below.

The Council is invited to note the overarching, priority and supplementary actions allocated to HEFCW within the ESDGC Strategy for Action, and note the proposed way forward as set out in Annex 2.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 22 This paper has no immediate financial implications. In anticipation of action needed to support the implementation of the ESDGC action plan, £15,000 has been earmarked under the heading *Sustainable Development*. We recognise that this is a very small sum and would need look to the Assembly Government to properly support any additional costs associated with the Action Plan.
- 23 The Action Plan recognises that, although many of the actions would probably involve changes in procedures and practices where no direct financial input is required, there are some that will have financial implications. The Assembly Government has a dedicated baseline for ESDGC - £150k annually for the three years to 2009-10. The Action Plan states that, in 2006-07, priority will be given to the development of appropriate ESDGC common standards and the development of an initial continuing professional training programme, especially in the further education sector.
- 24 The position of ESDGC Champion is also to be funded from this source. As well as ensuring that the actions set out in the Plan are addressed, the Champion will give priority to "preparing a fully costed financing plan ... to inform future budget planning decisions for all of the key stakeholders involved." This rolling plan will be "discussed and agreed annually with the key stakeholders."
- 25 Statements made within the HE Sector chapter recognise that some of the HE actions have clear cost implications, eg "the capital cost of new build and major refurbishment", and the "extra costs of greening buildings to reduce their energy consumption and maintenance". These issues were raised with the ESDGC Champion in a meeting in January 2007 in order to inform the development of her costed financial plan. She has suggested, however, that some immediate funding (around £30k) might be made available from the Welsh Assembly Government's ESDGC dedicated baseline in support of a number of the actions assigned to HEFCW: the use of external consultants to develop a baseline of activity and/or identify best practice; the sharing of best practice examples in relation to environmental management systems; and to help kick-start training development/curriculum work, working in conjunction with the Higher Education Academy and/or the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. Further details are given against the actions listed at Annex 2. We understand that initial funding proposals would need to be taken to the ESDGC panel in May 2007.
- 26 From information provided in HEI Strategic Plans in 2006, and subsequently from HE Division colleagues, it is apparent that sustainable development-related activities within some of our HEIs have already been funded from the Assembly's ESDGC dedicated baseline. In future we might seek to influence the funding criteria to achieve more

effective dissemination and /or the sharing of best practice of successful projects and activities.

PUBLICITY IMPLICATIONS

- 27 We will need to keep the HE sector informed of the implications of the publication of the WAG Action Plan and the actions we intend to take forward as a result. The actions set out in Annex 2 will have implications for the way in which we require HEIs to formulate their future plans in respect of Third Mission, Learning and Teaching, as well as the overarching institutional Strategic Plan. These issues should feature in ongoing strategic discussions with HEIs on their overall strategic intentions (for example, we are proposing that ESDGC forms one of the topics of discussion at a forthcoming HEW/CHEW/HEFCW meeting), but will also be made clear in forthcoming HEFCW Circulars requesting these various plans. Additional requirements on the sector will be the subject of separate HEFCW Circulars.
- 28 One potential use for the earmarked funding would be to support a sector-wide ESDGC conference in 2007. We are currently discussing ideas with the Higher Education Academy, the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges and with the ESDGC Champion.

RISK ASSESSMENT

- 29 The Minister has stated her intention to follow progress against this Action Plan personally and, wherever necessary, to intervene to ensure that the key stakeholders are taking their responsibilities seriously. HEFCW will need to take seriously its own responsibilities in respect of the HE sector, and in relation to those placed upon HEFCW as an organisation. We will need to ensure that we are able to take forward the actions identified for HEFCW, where these are realistic and practicable.
- 30 The main risk is that HEFCW will not have the resource (in terms of earmarked budget to properly fund the HE sector) to fully adopt this agenda. This would mean that HEFCW would be unable to take action on the relevant recommendations set out in the ESDGC action plan. Officers will continue to raise this matter with Assembly representatives.
- 31 A secondary risk might be a lack of commitment to this agenda from within the HE sector, at least in terms of current priorities. We will seek to manage this risk through a proactive and constructive engagement with key players in the sector, possibly through and after any proposed conference.

DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 32 This paper has no immediate implications for race, gender, disability or the Welsh language. However, as plans develop we will need to ensure that full consideration is given to issues relating to diversity and equal opportunities, according to the relevant legislation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 33 The Council is invited to note the overarching, priority and supplementary actions allocated to HEFCW in the ESDGC Strategy for Action, and note the proposed way forward as set out in Annex 2.

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