

Commonwork

WORKING  
TOGETHER TO  
SUPPORT SCHOOL  
LEADERSHIP FOR  
THE FUTURE



Climate change

Conservation

Sustainability

# Leading for the future

A collaborative project to support, inspire and engage school leaders for positive change in education

# Contents

FOREWORD BY MICK WATERS	02
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	03
1: THE PARTNERS	07
2: THE PROJECT	12
3: THE PROGRAMME	14
4: THE FINDINGS	17
5: LEARNING FOR THE FUTURE	25
6: IN SUMMARY	27
7: REFERENCES	29
8: THE PARTICIPANTS	31

Leading for the Future is a leadership development programme designed by Commonwork, David Dixon and WWF-UK to explore how to create more leaders for sustainable schools.

The evaluators and authors of this report are Jane Buckley Sander, learning and strategy advisor, Commonwork, and Fay Blair, independent consultant, leadership and empowerment for sustainability.

# Foreword

How do we encourage the natural inclination in most young people to respect and care for their planet, and to act on their innate sense of justice in their own and wider affairs? How do we help them to learn what is important for all our futures? Do we expect, hope or insist that they learn about these things in school? How do we overcome the counter arguments from detractors who simply say that school time is too valuable to be spent on peripherals and should be spent with purpose on more valuable studies?

This study examines the development of a group of school leaders who worked together to help each other think through the challenge. The report, *Leading for the Future*, shows the steps they took, the problems they met and the conclusions they reached.

What comes through is the importance of a philosophical outlook and commitment to making it happen at a time when schooling is changing dramatically. We have questions to answer about the value of learning that might not be academic; we have challenges around the extent to which young people are given a voice, we have the assertion that learning needs to be highly structured and incremental and measured. Later, we might teach young people about the world beyond and the possibility of it being at risk. The pressure on school leaders to deliver 'short term' objectives means that a distraction from a bigger picture is always a possibility. The high stakes accountability framework is a sword hanging by a thread.

Yet, what could be a more important accountability than the future of people and planet?

Core values and empowerment are essential features of the working group's efforts; yet are they not at the heart of leadership also? School leaders can only engage with a sustainability agenda if their personal values are awakened. This is at the heart of the *Leading for the Future* programme. The necessary spiralling and deeper reflection encourage leaders to ensure that those they lead see a bigger set of dimensions: the earth and the creatures that share its space.

We know from research that very young children are concerned about the future of their planet, and about those humans and non-humans whose existences are threatened. We also know that when their school offers a 'can do' outlook and children are supported in making a difference through sustainable change, the children feel better in themselves and more optimistic about futures. Their morale rises and associated with that is a rise in scores on tests. Some people see the life of tests as being essential grounding for adulthood; others know that what matters is that children become equipped for the test of life. Does it matter? The test results are not in opposition to children believing that they can make a difference and have some ways of doing so. We spend too much time arguing about polarities.

The report is a fascinating read. It opens eyes on the role of leadership and the importance of being true to ourselves. It demands a wider audience and deep consideration about the future of learning for our children.

Mick Waters, Professor of Education, Wolverhampton University

# Executive Summary

How can we create more leaders for sustainability who live and work for a just and sustainable world?

Global crises such as peak oil, limits to economic growth and climate change amounting to a ‘perfect storm’ (Beddington, 2009), together with global injustices, social, economic and political unrest all point to an uncertain future. Our children are bombarded daily with news of our incessant assaults on each other and on our shared home, planet earth. How should we act? How can we equip our children to deal with these certain global uncertainties?

Leading for the Future poses an answer to these questions. Education must address these concerns, and courageous and challenging educational leadership is needed to do so.

Leading for the Future is an action research programme that has come from the recognition that the need for school leaders for sustainability is now more urgent than ever. And not just because of global uncertainties, but also because the guiding government frameworks and support systems for sustainable schools have been removed, and along with them the official expectations and responsibilities for working as whole communities towards sustainability. Meanwhile the global problems continue to escalate.

How do we prepare our young people to connect with these global crises? How do we equip them to challenge global injustice? In effect, how do we create leaders for sustainability who recognise the interconnected and interdependent nature of our human and non-human world. How do we help them to nurture, guide and develop the values, knowledge and skills needed by young people to become thoughtful, resilient and creative in dealing with the future?

The pilot project was designed, developed and delivered by Commonwork, David Dixon, head teacher, and WWF-UK. Its purpose was to explore how to engage and encourage school leaders to rise to this challenge and to develop a courageous leadership; one that embraces the emotional self and its values alongside the cognitive self, and that has the whole of sustainability at its heart and underpinning its thinking and its actions.

Leading for the Future also offered an opportunity to explore whether a combination of experiential learning, hosted space, deep reflection on values and interconnections within self, between each other and with the natural world could inspire and create leaders for sustainability. The hope is that such engagement and exploration will lead to transformational change within leaders and within the wider education systems.

This report has been produced by the two evaluators commissioned with capturing the findings of the programme in order to evaluate its effectiveness and its value, and to help shape any future programmes. It is not intended as an academic report, but rather as an exploration and evaluation of the validity of the thinking and practical application of the programme.

*“Moral, ethical values: without these, nothing can or will ever change. They are the foundation for everything else.”*

Pilot participants’ feedback

## THE PARTNERSHIP AND THE IDEA

The programme was rooted in the shared commitment to experiential learning and the importance of 'hosted space'

This partnership was initially brokered by David Dixon, a primary school head teacher, who has worked with both Commonwork and WWF-UK, and who recognised a shared interest in wanting to test and answer the question:

How do we create more leaders for sustainability who live and work for a just and sustainable world?

The programme design, development and delivery team consisted of several Commonwork staff, a primary school head teacher, a member of WWF-UK staff and an external evaluator. This core team brought together a range of experiences and expertise, including leadership, education and training, facilitation, psychology and sociology, sustainability, and change management.

The team spent much time discussing their different perspectives and shaping a shared approach through the aims and objectives. Out of this collective rich mix of experiences and expertise came a shared belief in the significance of school leaders in achieving transformative change in schools, and the need therefore to give impetus to training in the leadership of sustainable learning.

There was also a strong shared belief in the importance of exploring core personal values as catalysts for making institutional change, and that achieving sustainability required social, political, and economic, as well as environmental change. The aims and objectives therefore brought these ideas and beliefs together as a framework from which to build an innovative programme for leaders for the future.

While there were the inevitable subtle differences in the ideas and understanding of leadership, psychological and sociological influences, change theories, and the ability of 'solutions' to achieve sustainability, the strong commonalities and shared beliefs led to a potentially powerful programme to bring about transformational change.

The programme design and delivery was rooted in the shared commitment to experiential learning and the importance of 'hosted space', rather than more conventional approaches that may assume a cognitive and ideologically rooted understanding of global issues. There was a conscious decision to avoid being mechanical and prescriptive, which meant not using sticky notes, electronic media and leadership tool-kits. Instead the programme was carefully structured and ordered to inspire and stimulate a deep reflection about self and values, about others, about links to the natural world and the interconnectedness of all of these through a mix of head (cognitive), heart (emotional/spiritual) and hands (physical) activities. The programme was offered to two groups of participants, and following feedback from the first cohort, the team adapted the programme for the second cohort.

## ACTION RESEARCH

The programme was conceived from the start as action research, with two evaluators appointed as part of the core team to design and implement evaluative tools for the programme. In the spirit of this research the team regularly met to review and plan in light of the evolving findings from the two cohorts.

## RECRUITMENT

Participants were selected on the basis of their level of interest and commitment to sustainability for Cohort 1 (C1), as well as the seniority of their leadership position for Cohort 2 (C2). C1 consisted largely of teaching practitioners in primary schools with various levels of responsibility within their schools, plus one person from a local education authority. C2 consisted mostly of head teachers or senior management team members of primary schools, with one secondary school head of department. Among C2 were two lead people from Ofsted and the National College for School Leadership (The National College).

## DELIVERY

Commonwork hosted the training at Bore Place in Kent, which includes a residential learning centre, an organic dairy farm, vegetable and fruit gardens, fields and woodland. This setting embodies Commonwork's exploration of sustainable working and living over the last 35 years and its desire to develop a nurturing, creative learning space. It does this by sharing lessons learnt through successes and problems, and by providing a variety of head, heart and hands experiences. Together these offer visitors a hosted space in which to reflect and to explore their own journeys towards sustainability.

The programme consisted of two parts for each cohort. Part 1, the core, took place over four days with Part 2, a 24-hour follow-up, delivered six weeks later. The first cohort of six met in October and December 2010, and the second cohort of twelve met in March and May 2011.

## THE FINDINGS

The participants experienced a strong reawakening of their core values and have been inspired to take action within their professional practice

The evidence gathered through observation, questionnaires, interactive evaluative sessions and subsequent feedback suggests that the aims and objectives were largely achieved. It also shows that all participants experienced the programme as transformative and empowering, leading some to change their practice with students, colleagues and systems. Some have since changed jobs within education and some have felt empowered to tackle particular barriers they faced in their work. In addition, the participants affirmed the programme design and highly valued time out for themselves in the hosted space. They experienced a strong reawakening of their core values and have been inspired to take action within their professional practice.

The first aim of '... creating more leaders for sustainability with an understanding of the full meaning of sustainability' seems to have succeeded, with the programme clearly having had a strong impact on individual participants, almost all of whom would recommend it to others. It does, however, leave a question of whether it created more or strengthened existing leaders who were already inclined to sustainability in learning, particularly in C2. It is less certain that all participants were wholly engaged with the full meaning of sustainability, with evidence suggesting that for many, it was limited largely to the environmental dimension.

The second aim 'to start the journey to find a sustainable authentic and profound understanding of the existential self, which informs personal and social action', has undoubtedly been achieved. Evidence shows that all experienced the programme as transformative and empowering. They expressed a rediscovering of their sense of self, their true values and potential agency, as well as a wish to increase reflection time for themselves, both personally and in professional practice, in order to step back regularly from the pressures of measured performance.

The third and fourth aims ‘to learn from the programme and to roll it out’, are under way. A culture of review and learning has permeated the programme from the start, with significant investment of resources in reviewing and sharing the learning.

Similarly the objectives underpinning the aims were met to greater or lesser degrees. Generally those that were linked to individuals and their sense of self and of their values were met more than those that were linked to exploring the holistic nature of sustainability, and how it affects future thinking and learning. Some could not be evaluated because they were more open to different interpretations, and some because they require a longer timescale for true evaluation.

## LEARNING FOR THE FUTURE

With regard to the programme development, a number of issues can be considered for future events, such as: allowing more time to work on building common understandings and in developing roles and relationships; refining aims, objectives and learning outcomes; and revisiting the balance of activities and the journey participants are invited to take. The nature of facilitation and the relationship between the team and the participants learning together needs to be strengthened through living the values of critical thinking and a non-didactic approach.

Further thought is also needed about matching the programme design to the intended audience as the project is scaled out. Is it to create new and more leaders or to strengthen those with the initial interest and commitment? Is it for practitioners or those already in formal leadership positions? Or is it for all of these?

Whether these trials of the programme were successful in creating more leaders for sustainability, whether they strengthened existing leaders, or indeed whether both outcomes are equally valid since both result in strengthened leaders for the future, are questions for discussion and further research. There is also the need for further research to evaluate the effect on participants, their practice and their organisations over a much longer timescale to gain a clearer picture of the programme’s long-term effectiveness.

Despite these questions, both the participants and the project team felt that the programme was very successful and worthwhile. The lessons learnt from the experience will inform future plans for this approach to leadership development.

*“I have reflected on my work and I am focusing on being more resilient and pushing forward on the positives.”*<sup>1</sup>

*“I feel really energised by the course, better informed and educated, more committed and deeply inspired to make a difference.”*

*“There’s no turning back... I’ve been through too much and I can’t ignore what I have gone through. One of the biggest things I’ve learnt: define the outcome and let go of how people get there.”*

*“Confusion to clarity moved into perplexity, but this perplexity is actually helping me. The will to get it all right lies in people. It’s about the collective capacity of human beings; in a way it doesn’t matter about activities.”*

# 1 The partners

The Leading for the Future programme provided an opportunity to test how effective an experience of the natural world, in combination with hosted space, would be for educational leaders

Leading for the Future is a partnership project designed, developed and delivered jointly by Commonwork (Jacqueline Leach, Julia Bracewell, Jane Buckley Sander, David England, Paula Conway, and other members of staff based at Bore Place, Sevenoaks, Kent); David Dixon, former head teacher of Bowbridge Primary School, Newark, Nottinghamshire; and WWF-UK (Zaria Greenhill). Fay Blair, an independent consultant, was also recruited as an external evaluator to support the action research element of the project.

The purpose was to explore how a combination of experiential learning, hosted space, deep reflection on values and interconnections within self, between each other and with the natural world could inspire and create leaders for sustainability. The hope is that such engagement and exploration will lead to transformational change within leaders and within the wider education systems.

These individuals brought a rich mix of experience as educators, trainers and key leaders within their own spheres of practice. They contributed many personal ideas as well as organisational philosophies and culture to inform the design of the innovative training aimed for in Leading for the Future.

## COMMONWORK

Commonwork has been working towards just and sustainable solutions in farming, the environment and education for 35 years, with an underpinning philosophy of connection to self, to others and to the planet.

Commonwork has been working towards just and sustainable solutions in farming, the environment and education for 35 years with an underpinning philosophy of connecting to the self, to others and to the planet. Its history is rooted in the founders' observations of the increasing disconnection in the world and the need to explore how people could reconnect to themselves, to each other in an often fractured and unjust global society, and to the natural world in the face of continual degradation and exploitation. Through a considered mix of head, heart and hands experiences, and activities immersed in the rich resources of Commonwork and its setting of Bore Place, such reconnection is facilitated and interdependences recognised. This principle of connection is also applied to the mix of experiences in which the whole is greater than the parts, and where all are interconnected. Key learning points cannot be predicted and may be different for each individual.

Commonwork's understanding of sustainability is rooted in the Brundtland and UNESCO reports (WECD, 1987), which include social, political and economic aspects of sustainability, in addition to the environmental. To help make these interconnected aspects more explicit, Commonwork explores ways to integrate its development education work into the education experiences offered at Bore Place. In doing so it is able to make the interconnected aspects of sustainability more explicit and accessible to school partners and other visitors. This work has recently been developed through its Sustainable and Global Schools Learning Network pilot programme and expressed in *Habitats and Humanity* (Buckley Sander and Bracewell, 2011).

Offering learning experiences within a hosted space is also an important and integral part of Commonwork's understanding of sustainable living, where active preparation of the environment (social, natural and built) is used to demonstrate and model attempts to live the sustainable values being espoused through personal, interrelational and environmental behaviour. Within this environment the conditions and experiences are offered and shared to open up the potential for change, rather than pre-determining it. The programme provided an opportunity to test how effective an experience of hosted space would be for educational leaders. Would it inspire participants to discover for themselves the qualities and values that help to make a positive and inspirational learning environment?

Commonwork views change as something that happens through relationships, giving but not taking authority, and building collaborative dialogue. Change is in people. It is developmental and organic rather than linear and predetermined. Spreading change can be through 'defectors in place' and 'creative resistance' (Commonwork Archives, 1976-present), working peaceably but critically to identify what's behind what is presented as the problem. To achieve such critical qualities requires a reflective approach, personally on emotions and cerebrally on meanings and interpretations. Then to achieve more far-reaching change requires building communities of practice of 'defectors' and 'creative resisters'; individuals who are potential influences in a wider context, and groups who will eventually join up to make a critical mass. Though rooted in individuals, change must be collective too.

Commonwork also recognises the essential nature of reflection and review within a learning culture, and so builds these into its programmes. It was through such review and reflection of its Sustainable and Global Schools Learning Network programme (Buckley Sander, 2008-2011) that the significance of the head teacher or school leader in establishing embedded and sustainable change clearly emerged. This led to thinking about how to develop a leadership training to test the approach of living the values and learning by doing; finding out what it could be like to live and work sustainably here and now; and also to review and share the learning more widely.

DAVID DIXON

David Dixon has successfully demonstrated how sustainability can be placed at the heart of a school's life and community.

As well as being a practicing head teacher, Dr Dixon has also studied and written about the implications of this for 'green leadership' more widely (Dixon, 2009). He is passionate about the urgent need to answer the question:

How do we create more leaders for sustainability who live and work for a just and sustainable world?

Behind this question lie a number of core beliefs rooted in the research for his Doctorate of Education. These include the belief that values are at the heart of the individual's response to the realities and facts they face, such as climate change and peak oil, and that these values are influenced by all sorts of sociological and political forces. *Common Cause* (Crompton, 2010), an influential report on cultural values in campaigning on 'bigger than self' issues, states:

*'...an individual's values have an important bearing on how they respond when presented with facts; but their values themselves are subject to influence by many aspects of their lived experiences (aspects over which government, business and civil society*

*organisations have considerable influence). Often, these aspects of their lived experience will affect the values without conscious awareness.'*

Dr Dixon based his work on the belief that values are equally strongly shaped by family and personal influences. Research suggests that a strong motivation to implement sustainable practices stems from an emotional response to the significance of global challenges and how leaders feel compelled to address these at a local level. This can be traced to early childhood influences, which are built upon through subsequent schooling and professional training (Jackson, 2008). Bottery (2005) talks about such 'values-led' leaders as having a 'moral compass', which is the modus operandi of all their thinking and actions.

In terms of environmental and global issues, he explored the belief that it is important to encourage education leaders to look more deeply at Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) issues so that green tokenism can be avoided.

*'ESD... is at its 'light green' stage. In practice, there is a lot of discussion about personal responsibility and commitment to reduce waste and consume wisely. ... we accept that we need to evolve this into 'bright green thinking', a sense of remaking the world, of going beyond a sometimes dispiriting 'less and less' prospect to something aspirational as well as sustainable.'* (Webster and Johnson, 2008).

His findings concluded that there is a danger of teaching predetermined skills and behaviours, and of educationalists facing the dilemma of teetering, or being seen to teeter, into advocacy, and worse, brainwashing. These ideas are raised in *Education for Sustainable Development: Two Sides and an Edge* (Vare and Scott, 2007), where 'ESD1 – Learning for Sustainable Development' is described as promoting positive behaviours for wider social and environmental benefits, and 'ESD2 – Learning as Sustainable Development', as building capacity to think critically about issues. Any training for sustainability leadership should be about supporting people to move beyond ESD1 and into ESD2.

An integral aspect of the research concluded not only that being a leader for sustainability both stems from a set of values, but also demands certain traits such as:

*'... personal courage and the willingness to operate outside the parameters of conventional thinking and operations, which are prescribed and proscribed by national education bodies.'* (Dixon, 2009),

and that these traits are deemed as sound by official bodies who recognise their value. Studies by Jackson and the National College for School Leadership (2008) and Ofsted (2009), suggest that such leaders for sustainability are usually successful in the field of school improvement in general. They tend to be outward looking, eager and able to influence their peers in other schools. They are often used as case studies of good practice by decision makers in local and national government. Their fundamental leadership and management practices are deemed as sound, and they are able to instigate lasting changes at all levels of their organisation and beyond in a confident and effective manner. They are also resilient, innovative, needs-led and unafraid of being seen as mavericks if they feel that a cause is just (Fullan, 2003); they can be sceptical of the external systems they encounter.

From this, Dr Dixon developed the belief that being such a leader requires a profound questioning of the nature of the present education system and what it should be, given the likely future full of uncertainties to be faced by young people. To address this, leadership training needs to include discussions about the nature of the curriculum and how much it might embrace creativity, and not just the delivery of easily measured outcomes. Within this there are distinct

echoes of the Plowden Report, which in the late 1960s seemed to predict the dilemmas faced by today's education professionals.

*'One obvious purpose is to fit children for the society into which they will grow up. To do this successfully it is necessary to predict what that society will be like... We can fear that it will be much engrossed with the pursuit of material wealth, too hostile to minorities, too dominated by mass opinion and too uncertain of its values.'* (Plowden, 1967).

WWF-UK

WWF's overarching purpose statement is 'humans living in harmony with nature', while WWF-UK Education believes that the role of teachers and leaders is crucial to embedding sustainable and global principles in the education system.

WWF-UK is well known for its work on the environment through a variety of approaches and activities, including connection with the natural world, education and research into leadership. This includes leadership training in the fields of education, business and economy through programmes such as the 'One Planet Leaders' MBA and the 'Talking Transformations' initiative.

WWF's overarching purpose statement is 'humans living in harmony with nature', and one way in which this work is organised in WWF-UK is through the theme of 'changing the way we live'.

This entails working with a broad set of sectoral, social, economic and political drivers that collectively act as the underlying root causes of biodiversity loss, and an increasing human ecological and carbon footprint. The focus on the importance of being in harmony with nature was central to WWF-Scotland's 'Natural Change' project, which uses contact with nature and a personal engagement approach for change.

This was an inspiration for the development of the Leading for the Future project, where it was felt a shortened wilderness experience through a solo reflection in the woods held great importance as a means for getting in touch with the self through nature. It was envisaged that this could offer a key moment in the reflective journey where a breakthrough in deep values and self awareness might occur.

WWF's education programme is directed towards education as a broad national and social system, which can support and facilitate social change towards a more just and sustainable future. WWF-UK Education believes that the role of teachers and leaders is crucial to embedding sustainable and global principles in the education system, and focuses its programmatic work on supporting initial teacher education, continuing professional development, and leadership training. WWF-UK experiments and innovates in the field of behaviour change, notably through the 'Natural Change' project, the 'Common Cause' project and the 'Community Learning and Action for Sustainable Living' project of 2008.

A further inspiration for WWF-UK's work has been the testing and co-creation of work with young people through the theme of I/We/Planet as described by Jane Riddiford, and which has much in common with Commonwork's long-term work on connection to self, to others and to the natural world.

WWF-UK Education has worked with the National College for School Leadership to study forms and styles of leadership that are successful in leading sustainable schools, and in 2008 produced a report bringing together key findings, called *Leading Sustainable Schools: What the Research Tells Us*. This was aimed at creating a more nuanced debate around school leadership for sustainability and to inform future whole-system work in order to forward the Sustainable

Schools' national framework. It also supported the last government's policy objective to make all schools sustainable schools by 2020.

WWF-UK has also been instrumental in offering the *Common Cause* report (Crompton, 2010), which was developed by a coalition of civil society organisations, including WWF, and which advocates more intelligent attention to deep values in social change and campaigning.

*“For me, it was more of a gradual process, where I gradually gained clarity and the words to express my deep-seated vision.”*

*“I was pleased that my sense of purpose was there and still had the same passion as previously. It will take planning and time, but I do have a real belief in the education of children and preparing them for the world in which they live.”*

*“The first woodland session was the turning point for me because I realised that if I was going to get anything from the course I would have to come out of my comfort zone and just get stuck in. I had considered just going straight back home, but I am so glad that I stayed.”*

*“My turning point was probably the solo time, but as a natural next step from the other activities. You couldn't do the solo without the other preparation... After the solo I felt a sense of understanding of my place in the world.”*

*“The milking parlour was my turning point: the profound experience of re-connecting with the natural world through head/hands/heart. This was the revelation that led into ‘Do we value what we see, or do we see what we value?’”*

Pilot participants' feedback

## 2 The project

Head teachers will only place sustainability in its widest sense at the core of their schools if their personal values are engaged.

Based on the interest from both Commonwork and WWF-UK in developing leadership for sustainable schools, with David Dixon bringing the partners together, a core team emerged. As the ideas evolved and developed, additional Commonwork staff joined the team to help deliver the programme. This team included a wide range of experiences and expertise, including leadership, facilitation, psychology and sociology, sustainability, education and training, and change management.

Team meetings were scheduled to develop the thinking and to explore how different perspectives and emphases in the common agenda could be nuanced into a programme. The many themes discussed included self awareness and psychological understanding; conscious exploration of core values and influences on them; a broad and full meaning of sustainability; global awareness and development education; fundamental purposes of education; deepening reflection skills; alertness to different future scenarios; greater sensitivity to the natural world; and change management and leadership. Time was at a premium and there was an urgency to move into offering a training event. Many of these discussions continued throughout the programme to clarify and refine understanding. These discussions helped to ensure a continuing seamless delivery by the team and sound collaboration between the team and the participants as the activities and events progressed, see figures 3 and 4, *The Programme, part 1 and 2*.

The outcome of these debates was agreement with the common aspiration and central idea behind the development of Leading for the Future, which is that school leaders will only place sustainability in its widest sense, encompassing social, political, economic and environmental interdependence, at the core of their schools' ethos and culture if their personal values are engaged.

The planned programme sought to encourage participants to connect to themselves, to others (both immediately present and in wider local and global communities), and to the natural world. The thinking was that by linking these connections to their deep-seated values and being suitably empowered, participants could be in a better position to embed sustainability through influencing all their organisational stakeholders.

Out of this wealth of background thinking and discussion, the team shaped a set of aims and objectives.

### AIMS OF THE LFF PROGRAMME

**A.** To create more 'leaders for sustainability', living and working for a just and sustainable world, through first, second and third person experience and learning. We understand sustainability to encompass social, political, economic and environmental interdependence.

In essence leaders for sustainability have '*... an integrated, systemic understanding of the world and their place in it, and can communicate this to others. They understand the interconnectedness of society, the environment and individuals within these contexts.*' (Jackson, 2008)

**B.** To start: '*... the journey to find a sustainable, authentic and profound understanding of the existential self, which informs personal and social action.*' (West-Burnham, 2003)

- C. To capture and share the learning of the facilitation process, through action research, partners, project team and participants.
- D. To roll out this programme nationally, embracing the above definitions of sustainability.

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE LFF PROGRAMME

1. To provide space, time and experiences for deep personal contemplation.
2. To inspire participants to lead transformational change for sustainability in their own lives and organisations.
3. To encourage participants to sustain their will to act in their immediate situation and beyond, through relationship with others, and to create or join networks and communities of practice.
4. To explore understandings of ecological systems and how they connect to our sense of self, our values and moral imperative.
5. To explore (a) different futures and (b) (different) ways of thinking.
6. To evaluate the effectiveness of the residential by gauging how much participant values have changed, and how this translates into future practice. This evaluation is also to be used to improve future programmes.

*“The whole has been a profound experience. It’s got in there, deep. I am ready to go.”*

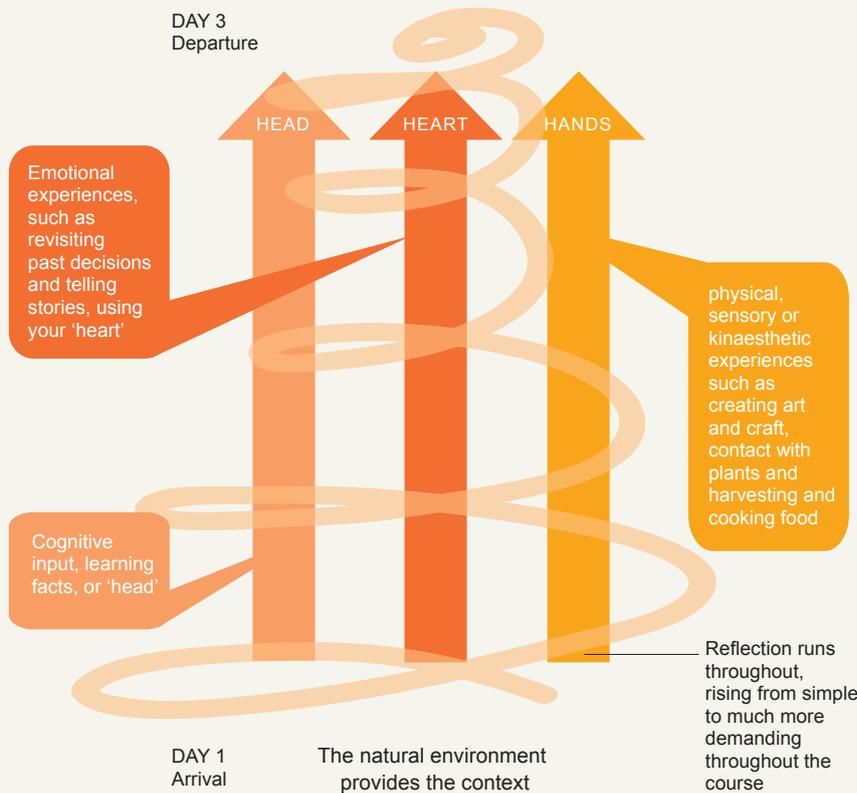
*“Enjoyment didn’t come from one session, it came from the whole experience and what I have got out of it; the people I’ve met.”*

*“No one session stood out as most useful, but the opportunity to experience a range of activities and discuss with peers was valuable. It is very rare to have time to really reflect on philosophy, practice and vision. This is a vital aspect of the programme.”*

Pilot participants’ feedback

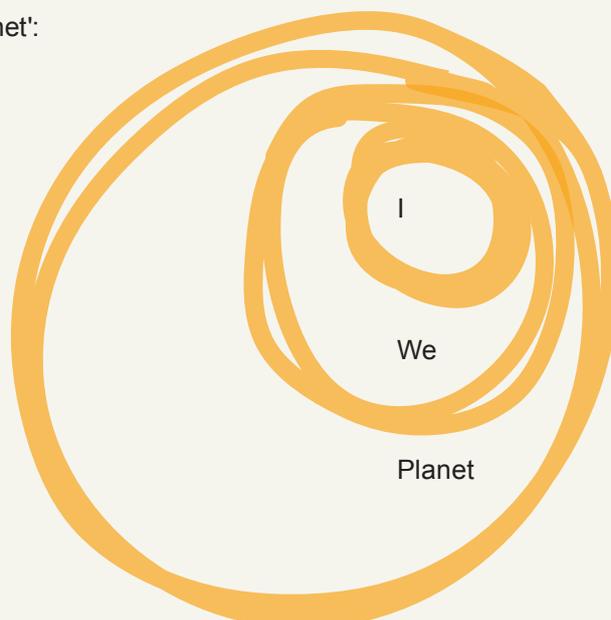
# The spiral curriculum incorporating reflective capacities combined with emotional, cognitive and kinaesthetic learning

Figure 1



Leading for the Future is designed around spiralling and deepening reflection on the interconnections and interdependences within ourselves, between each other and with our physical and cultural home that is planet earth, using a mix of head (cognitive), hands (physical) and heart (emotional/spiritual) activities.

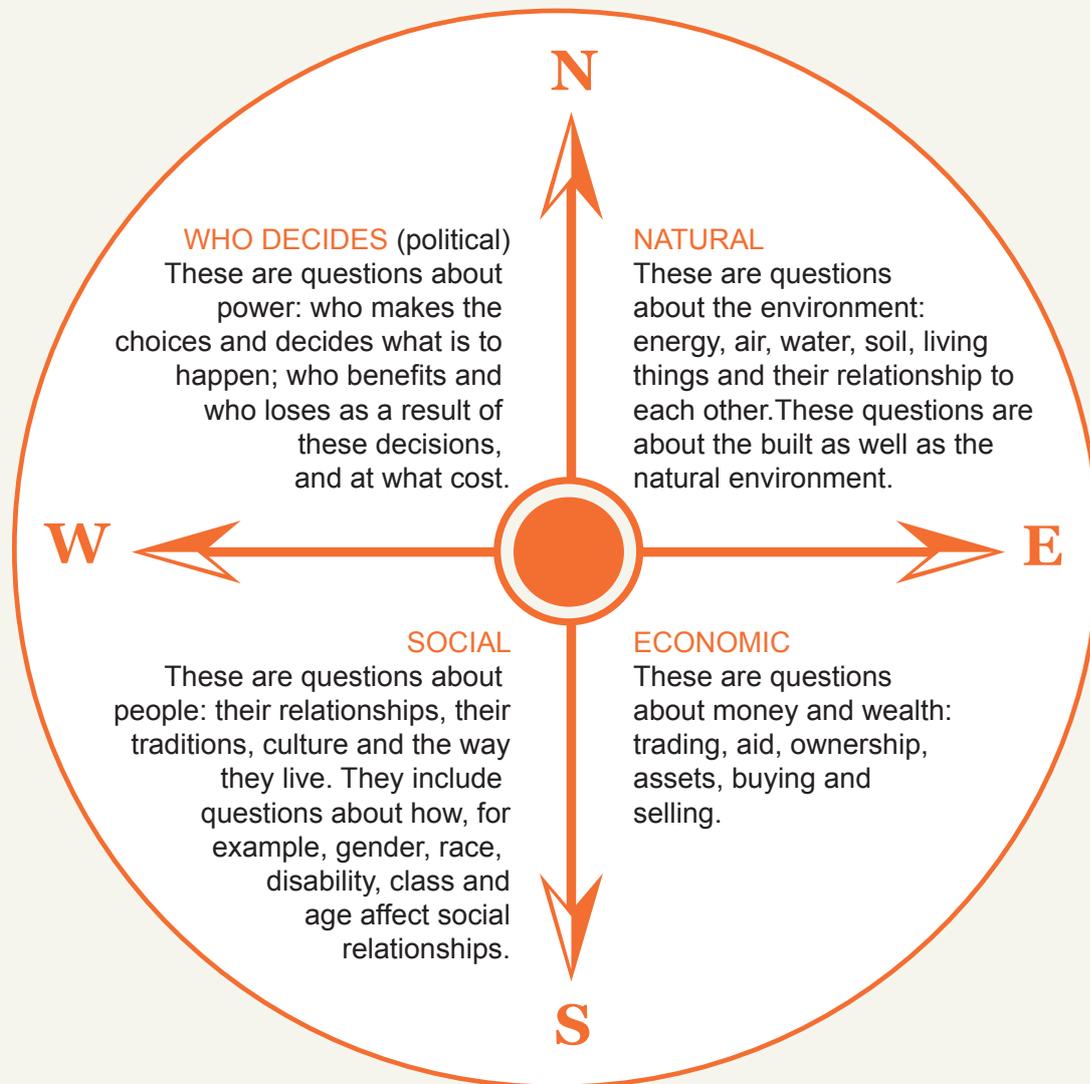
I – we – the planet':  
a framework for  
thinking about  
change



Leading for the Future is also concerned with connection to self, to others and to the natural world, summed up as I/We/Planet. The 'I' concerns our connections within self and the exploration of personal values. The 'We' is about our connections with others, both locally and in the wider world, and it is about our shared interdependence. The 'Planet' concerns our connections with the physical earth and our interdependence with it and the non-human beings that share its space.

# The Development Compass Rose

Figure 2



### 3 The programme

The team decided to use reflection as a vehicle for learning and to encourage participants to look within themselves, interpret what they see and then relate this to the challenges of the external world.

At the heart of the thinking about how to translate these aims and objectives into a programme were some core pedagogical approaches to which all the partners subscribed. These were rooted in the shared commitment to experiential learning and the importance of hosted space, rather than the more traditional approaches that may assume a cognitive and ideologically rooted understanding of global issues.

There was a conscious decision to avoid being mechanical and prescriptive, which meant not using sticky notes, electronic media and leadership tool-kits. Instead the programme was carefully structured and ordered into a journey of experiences and activities to inspire and stimulate a deep reflection about self and values, about others, and about the links with the natural world. The team designed and developed a mix of activities to engage the whole person: head (cognitive), hands (physical) and heart (emotional/spiritual), in order to explore and reflect on the interdependence and interconnections within ourselves, between each other, and with our physical and cultural home that is planet earth.

The team also decided early on to use reflection as a vehicle for learning in Leading for the Future and to encourage participants to look within themselves, interpret what they see and then relate this to the challenges of the external world. This necessitates making connections between a wide range of concepts found within the I/We/Planet model.

A crucial part of the reflection process was to include a check-in at the beginning of each day and a check-out to end each day. This was a time when each person, including team members, was offered the opportunity to articulate briefly their thoughts, feelings or observations.

See figure 1: *The spiral curriculum incorporating reflective capacities combined with emotional, cognitive and kinaesthetic learning.*

Reflection opportunities were also facilitated through kinaesthetic activities, as well as through the practice of spending time alone in a natural environment. The facilitation of this journey was geared to deepening reflection, spiralling back and into the self before moving forward and outwards to the wider world.

In common with the Commonwork philosophy of connection to self, to others, and to the natural world, WWF-UK has adapted the more recent model of I/We/Planet (Riddiford, 2010) for its work. Both these offer a basis through which to explore the relationship between self, each other and the world in terms of our culture and our collective beliefs, our personal values and our assumptions. This exploration requires a deep reflection on personal and wider societal values, and the myriad interconnections and interdependences.

Commonwork hosted the training at Bore Place, which was also fundamental to the programme design. Commonwork's active preparation of its environment (social, natural and built) is used to demonstrate and model the attempts to live the sustainable values being espoused through personal, interrelational and environmental behaviours. Within this hosted space the conditions and experiences are offered and shared to open up the potential for change, rather than predetermining it. The LfF programme provided an opportunity to test how effective an

experience of hosted space would be for educational leaders to engage with sustainability in its full sense.

After discussion about how best to handle communicating the full meaning of sustainability, it was agreed to place this explicitly in the aims, and to design activities that clearly demonstrated the connections between its different aspects, including using the Development Compass Rose, see Figure 2, *The Development Compass Rose*.

## THE RECRUITMENT PROCESSES

The aim was to recruit people who were not necessarily putting sustainability at the heart of their school.

The team produced a promotional leaflet to prompt interest, which presented the training as innovative and distinctive but without giving too much detail of the content. This was circulated through a number of the partners' contacts and national networks. Interested candidates were sent information about the aims of the Leading for the Future programme and then contacted, either by telephone or by email.

The C1 participants completed a form, which sought to elicit a profile of their interest and commitments, and which formed the basis for their selection. A key reference point for selection for C1 and C2 was a framework of progression in sustainability, with an attempt to reach those who had not yet developed their thinking and practice in sustainability. Although there was a high degree of subjectivity in the selection process because the criteria were rather loosely framed, the aim was to recruit people who were not necessarily putting sustainability at the heart of their school. In both instances some applicants were turned down if they already seemed to be leaders for sustainability.

## DESIGNING THE EVALUATION PROCESSES

The programme was conceived as a piece of action research from the start, so a commitment to evaluation and review was pursued throughout.

The LfF programme was conceived as a piece of action research from the start, and so a commitment to evaluation and review was pursued throughout with far greater resources allocated than is usual. This resulted in the appointment of two evaluators, one external and one from Commonwork, who participated in and observed all the development processes, the delivery of the training and the meetings and reviews that followed. Together they designed the evaluative tools, implemented them, analysed the findings and have written this final report.

The tools were designed to capture the feedback on the methods used in the programme and on the programme construction as a whole. They also captured feedback on the effects on the participants in an attempt to track their changed or changing thinking and professional practice, and to identify whether any change could be attributed to this experiential leadership programme.

The techniques used included participant observation, having first gained permission from the participants, a form for participants to record immediate responses to each activity, an interactive evaluation session for the whole group at the end of Part 2, and a pre- and post event form to capture and evaluate overall changes in priorities and personal change. The evaluators chose to use written forms rather than interviews with participants in an attempt to encourage honest and candid reflection and feedback.

While the evaluators were also aware of the dangers of deconstructing a programme that had been designed as a holistic experience, they felt that feedback on individual activities would help to understand the contribution of each to the whole experience, and therefore help with the overall evaluation of the programme.

## THE DELIVERY PROCESSES

...experiences in the surrounding natural environment of the woods, fields and gardens; the personal reflection activities of 'check-in' and 'check-out', as well as journal time, story telling, poems and metaphors as stimulus; and the solo, which was time spent alone in the woods.

The team met regularly throughout the programme for review and planning, and also to hold a debrief session each evening. See the programme outline, figures 3 and 4, *The Programme: part 1 and 2*.

The programme consisted of two parts for each cohort. Part 1, the core, took place over four days with Part 2, a 24-hour follow-up, delivered six weeks later. The first cohort of six met in October and December 2010, and the second cohort of twelve met in March and May 2011.

Having attracted few senior management applicants for the first pilot programme, C1 consisted mainly of primary school middle leaders, including two deputy head teachers, plus a local authority delegate. In contrast, C2 consisted mainly of head and deputy teachers in primary schools, with a secondary school head of department. There were also delegates from both Ofsted and The National College in C2.

Following completion of training for C1, a web-based community of practice, Basecamp, was set up to support ongoing communication between participants and the team. WWF-UK also arranged an informal reunion event for those C1 participants who wished to maintain contact with each other. The team has also organised an event in September 2011 to launch this report and to which all the participants are invited to share the learning with a wider audience.

Funding and resourcing input included significant in-kind staff time from the core delivery team over the 14 months of the project. Commonwork and WWF-UK jointly funded the residential costs of the project, which crucially meant that all participants were able to engage with the programme without cost, other than for cover in their schools.

*“I think it has strengthened my sense of purpose by re-focusing the thread of my leadership thoughts. It has given me the space to clarify thinking and re-connect with my values and ideals.”*

*“The course has been organic and a journey. Looking back, that journey is obvious and has been planned to get me to a destination, but also to help me realise that I have further to go.”*

*“My sense of purpose has changed – hugely. I wasn’t prepared for the emotional impact it has had though.”*

Pilot participants’ feedback

# The programme part 1: development and outline

Figure 3

**Where the LfF team comes from:** the partnership programme development meetings from May 2010.

**Formulation of the learning experience:** the offer, promotion, recruitment and selection processes.

**Programme planning and development for Part 1:** delivery process for Cohort 1 (Oct 2010); Cohort 2 (Mar 2011)

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
<b>Day 1</b> Tuesday			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrival and settle in</li> <li>• Making connections: global leaders and objects</li> <li>• ice-breakers</li> <li>• Introduction and purpose</li> <li>• Dinner and Nightwalk</li> </ul>
<b>Day 2</b> Wednesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bore Place site tour: farm, gardens, buildings</li> <li>• Breakfast and check-in</li> <li>• Create a journal to record thoughts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communing with the living world: imagining and empathising</li> <li>• Woodland activities: connecting to self through nature and creativity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making a difference: self and the act of will</li> <li>• Artwall: creatively capturing the journey</li> <li>• Check-out</li> <li>• Dinner</li> </ul>
<b>Day 3</b> Thursday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milking and Qi Gong</li> <li>• Breakfast, then check-in</li> <li>• Community of enquiry: critical thinking through a global perspective</li> <li>• Cook lunch: local and global food issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Story-telling and preparation for the solo, moving from the self and the past to the world and the future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The solo: time alone in the woods for reflection</li> <li>• Debrief of the solo: connecting self, values and the environment</li> </ul>
<b>Day 4</b> Friday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breakfast, then check-in</li> <li>• Future-scoping: considering potential future scenarios</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modelling a school for the future: designing an appropriate future learning environment</li> <li>• Complete evaluation forms</li> <li>• Final check-out</li> </ul>	

**Feedback questionnaires:** for participants and LfF team.  
**Feedback collation and analysis, and review of results and processes.**  
**Draft report on learning from Cohort 1 and discussed at team review meeting.**

# The programme part 2: development and outline

Figure 4

**Programme planning and development for Part 2:** delivery process for Cohort 1 (Dec 2010); Cohort 2 (May 2011)  
**Communications and network creation among the cohorts: 'Basecamp' set up.**  
**Goal planners completion by participants.**  
**Briefing for participants for Part 2 (to take place six weeks after Part 1), agreed by team.**  
**Communications with participants for Part 2.**

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
<b>Day 5</b> Thursday		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrival and settle in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to Part 2</li> <li>• Postcard activity: reflection on leadership</li> <li>• Dinner and optional Nightwalk</li> </ul>
<b>Day 6</b> Friday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optional pre-break fast walk</li> <li>• Breakfast, then check-in</li> <li>• Show and tell: sharing and actions taken since Part 1</li> <li>*String activity: the perfect storm and interconnections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Leadership models</li> <li>* Greenwash: challenging assumptions</li> <li>* Evaluation: interactive task</li> <li>What next?</li> <li>• Final check-out</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Revised programme for Cohort 2</li> <li>* Show and tell</li> <li>* Optional activities: leadership symbols, psychology of leadership, sharing sustainability tools</li> <li>* Design an LfF training programme</li> </ul>

Regular review meetings during the programme to ensure appropriate pace and facilitation: what we have learnt, evidence of effects, resources and skills, review.

## 4 The findings

*'You need to build the 'T' before you can build the 'Planet'. I do know my values/morals but it brought them to the fore, not changed them. I realise how it niggles too much if I compromise.'*

### THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAMME IN MEETING THE AIMS

The evidence suggests this aim was achieved, 'the journey was started' and the change in self was informing actions that were being pursued.

The two evaluators worked together with material gathered from the forms, the observations, the transcripts of each session and from the team's feedback during and following each residential event. One evaluator focused on the methodology used and its effectiveness in achieving the aims of the programme. The second evaluator focused on gathering evidence that pointed to personal change as a result of the programme. Together, the evaluators analysed the data and evidence against the initial aims and objectives, and translated these into the reported findings.

### AIMS OF THE LEADING FOR THE FUTURE PROGRAMME

**A** To create more leaders for sustainability, living and working for a just and sustainable world, through first, second and third person experience and learning. We understand sustainability to encompass social, political, economic and environmental interdependence.

In essence leaders for sustainability have '*... an integrated, systemic understanding of the world and their place in it, and can communicate this to others. They understand the interconnectedness of society, the environment and individuals within these contexts.*' (Jackson, 2008)

#### What effect did the programme have on the participants?

Of the total 18 participants, 11 said that it had had a profound or strong influence, 3 fairly strong, 1 modest and 3 were unsure, largely because they wanted more time to reflect on what it meant for them. The effect was very strong or profound for all in C1, but for fewer in C2.

#### Was there evidence of a growing 'integrated, systemic understanding and the interconnectedness of ...'?

Though this was not an explicit research question the evaluators observed, through some of the activities and discussions, indications that this sense of the interconnectedness of environmental, social, political and economic aspects of sustainability was not so well understood or developed for many of the participants. Even in those sessions that focused on self reflection there was little mention of wider sociological influences. In the second iteration of the programme some of the activities designed to build such awareness were left out in favour of others because of time constraints.

In summary, neither cohort revealed much detailed thinking of possible future scenarios or revised educational purposes to deal with them. These findings may be more about the design of the activities or the facilitation of them and the discussions, or as a result of time constraints, rather than about the participants' experiences.

### Would participants recommend the programme to others?

Of both cohorts, 8 out of 18 said they would recommend the programme as 'a must do'; 6 said 'yes, without hesitation'; 1 'yes'; 1 'really don't know'; and 2 'perhaps'. These last four participants qualified their responses by saying that it depended on a judgment about an individual's suitability for the course.

Overall it seems that the programme clearly had a strong impact on the individual participants. It is not clear, however, whether it created more or strengthened existing leaders who were already inclined to sustainability in learning, particularly in C2.

**B** To start '... the journey to find a sustainable, authentic and profound understanding of the existential self, which informs personal and social action.' (West-Burnham, 2003)

The subsets of each question in brackets below reflect the evaluators' interpretation, relating the research questions to the stated aim above.

### What changes did participants sense in themselves and in others? (Did they find the 'existential' self?)

For both cohorts, all the participants claimed a strengthened sense of purpose and self-affirmation, most talking of a reawakening of their core values and rediscovery of their true self, recognizing that this is a key building block for change.

For several their sense of vocation and passion in leadership was reinforced. In addition, and particularly for C1, there was an enhanced sense of power with several feeling able to tackle managers previously perceived as barriers to change.

### What were the significant outcomes for each of the participants? (What particular changes did they reflect in themselves?)

Many commented on changed 'ways of thinking, questioning and decision-making', 'how they reflect' and a 'growing awareness of and actions to develop sustainable practices'.

Many had their curiosity aroused to gain more knowledge about sustainability but this largely focused on the environmental aspects of sustainability.

For most of the participants the course seemed to reinforce their earlier affirmation of priorities in education, particularly of 'moral and values education', and 'wellbeing for all'. It seemed to enable their values to surface and to be recognised and reflected upon.

### How did these changes in self reflect in planned commitments resulting from the course? (Did this inform personal and social/professional action?)

#### PERSONAL

The major reference was to environmentally-conscious consumer behaviours, which were explicitly mentioned among the majority of C1 and C2.

#### SOCIAL/PROFESSIONAL

C1 have all used Basecamp to evidence changed actions with their schools, including adopting the 'check-in' reflective practice and more sustainable practices, doing more learning outside,

using the woodland activities, planning a whole curriculum, adopting a new teaching style and giving pupils more voice.

Both C1 and C2 have indicated plans for more child-centred approaches, with curricula and learning spaces to be designed and used more creatively.

In C2, 9 out of 12 documented some clear practical commitments, such as to change leadership style, to concentrate on building wider ownership in staff development, and to embed practices to enable more sustainable change through others. In addition, C2 saw a need to address local inequality and injustice as a precursor to working on a broader global consciousness.

The evidence suggests this aim was achieved, 'the journey was started' and the change in self was informing actions that were being pursued.

**C** To capture and share the learning of the facilitation process, through action research, partners, project team and participants.

**D** To roll out this seminar nationally, embracing the agreed definition of sustainability.

The team continues to reflect on how to take the initiative forward. Throughout the delivery of the programme there was a constant evolution of it in light of the evaluators' feedback and the team's reflections. A strong learning culture has permeated the whole approach and it is planned to share the recorded learning with all participants, as well as with a wider audience.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAMME IN ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES

The following analysis brings together objectives, activities and methods with feedback from the range of evaluative tools. It also links findings to individual objectives.

The programme's concept of interconnectedness and a journey through several parallel strands makes it difficult to identify findings with a single objective. There is therefore inevitably some repetition and overlap. The diagrams and comments about the whole programme are intended to make the interconnections more visible, and to offer a more holistic sense of the outcomes.

## THE WHOLE

All participants emphasized the value of the whole programme as being greater than the sum of its parts, and did not prioritise any one strand or set of activities over another. They all appreciated the connected, cumulative impact of the programme as a whole.

Both cohorts were affirmative about the 'journey' they experienced and the programme with its separation into two parts, and with time in between. Part 2 offered a good opportunity to return and reflect on action taken in between and to take things further. Both cohorts felt that a more explicit explanation of the journey would have been helpful from the start, so that doubts and resistances to some activities could be handled more easily.

The balance of the programme between I/We/Planet met with a mixed reception, particularly in C2, who felt there was too much about the natural world' and the 'I' and not enough on the realities of their social and political worlds, and how to make sustainable practices work within them.

The significance of the group dynamic, the experience, views and perspectives of the collective, including the delivery team, appeared to have a profound effect on all participants and was positively affirmed.

## OBJECTIVE 1

### To provide space, time and experiences for deep personal contemplation.

To achieve this objective the team offered: the hosted space; a variety of activities and experiences in the surrounding natural environment of the woods, fields and gardens; the personal reflection activities of 'check-in' and 'check-out', as well as journal time, story telling, poems and metaphors as stimulus; and the solo, which was time spent alone in the woods.

This objective was clearly met and the outcomes are evident in the measurement against aims above.

The evidence indicates both the hosted space and the thoughtfully designed programme of experiences, which connected participants to the farm and the natural surroundings of Bore Place, contributed extremely well to meeting this stated objective for both cohorts.

The whole atmosphere and ethos of Commonwork, as well as the activities, were seen as vital ingredients of success for the programme. It had offered a 'calming and restorative retreat' and 'modelled the practices and questions' being explored for more sustainable living, as well as offering a different stimulus for thinking. It allowed all to 'step back and take stock'.

Both C1 and C2 found the pace and intensity tough, and would have liked more time out for personal, undirected reflection or informal discussion. Weighed against this was the difficulty of deciding which activities to let go, all being valued by at least some as part of the whole experience. Both groups judged that there might be value in extending the length of Part 2.

The reflection activities and reflection spiral, deepening the introspection over time, were highly valued but felt by some to be too frequent and too focused on the 'I', on personal feeling rather than a balance of the emotional with the cognitive. Suggestions about clearer facilitation of other activities to address the more cognitive thinking and relevance to their context could balance this. All rated the stimulus of the story telling and poems very highly. The participant profiles show a huge respect for and almost universal adoption of the 'check-in' practice, either with students or with colleagues back at their places of work.

Though to some extent anticipated by the team, for most there was no clear 'turning point' in the journey through the programme, though there was for some. However there was some sense of resistance emerging after the first two days of intense concentration on self, and an eagerness to 'get on with it' and deal with the wider realities. But in retrospect, most saw the value of the extended look at self and the past before turning to the external and future world.

## OBJECTIVE 2

### To explore understandings of ecological systems and how they connect to our sense of self, our values and moral imperative.

As well as the whole experience of being at Bore Place and with each other, the activities particularly geared to meet this objective included sessions on systems thinking; leadership models; the solo, reflecting on self and ecological systems; global activities on use of resources and interconnectedness; icebreakers on global leaders, and choosing objects and images to explore the connections that they invoked within the self; the Development Compass Rose; analysis of self, personal journeys and influences; and meta-learning for C1.

This objective appeared to be met only to a limited degree. Though there is clear evidence of a strengthened sense of self, values and moral imperative, the wider understanding of ecological systems and the relation of the self to these was not particularly evident.

There was a widespread reaction from participants that the planet as one aspect of I/We/Planet was not given enough emphasis. Whereas C1 valued the concentration on the 'I'; both C1 and C2 highly valued the 'We' of the group, though they did not necessarily take the 'We' much further in their discourse; and C2 sought more on sustainability and analysis of their own contexts. The delivery team held back on a more content-rich approach to avoid being too didactic, but could have offered far more, and perhaps could do so in future offers of the programme.

The knowledge revealed in participants' discussions and their observations in activities showed how much variance there was in their understanding of ecological systems and broad, global, socio-political consciousness. There was for some an awakening of what 'they don't know' and perhaps need to better understand. Whether the programme succeeded in raising enough curiosity for participants to take their interest further would need fuller investigation, but to date this has not been particularly evident in reports of actions on Basecamp.

Though the whole experience was intended to offer an integrated holistic journey, where the connection between self, other and the wider world and systems permeated, it is hard to know if participants made the connections well or if the links should have been made more explicit through the team's facilitation.

The facilitation of the sessions was praised, particularly by C1, but C2 wanted more facilitated debriefing on each activity to draw out the connectedness and systems thinking, and to address the perceived imbalance between I, We and Planet. They recognised the cognitive as well as the emotive reflections that could have been drawn out at many points of the programme in order to explore its relevance for their leadership role and transferability into subsequent practice.

See Figure 5, *Leading for the future: evidence of achieving aspects of the aims*.

### OBJECTIVE 3

#### To explore different futures and ways of thinking.

This objective was particularly pursued through future scoping and modelling ideal future schools; community of enquiry; leadership models; and different learning styles used in the range of 'head, hands, heart' activities.

This objective was met, but to a qualified degree. Being prepared to challenge the status quo, in terms of adopting a more creative and holistic approach to teaching and leadership, is something many in both cohorts demonstrated between the first and second events. There may well be further evidence of this emerging over time. However, apart from two participants, there was less evidence of thinking through the implications of likely futures, for example, peak oil, limits to economic growth and climate change, and for the details of a desirable education to prepare for such scenarios. These likely future scenarios were explored, along with others, as contributors to a 'perfect storm' (Beddington, 2009) with C1, but not with C2 because of time constraints.

Again, this lack of evidence may be more about the design of the programme and its facilitation failing to draw out such thinking, rather than the participants' experiences. The materials and sequence of global activities offered to stimulate thinking in the future scoping and modeling of their ideal school were perhaps not adequate to enable wider ecological debates about such

scenarios as the 'perfect storm'. Whatever the reason, there was little evidence of explicit links being made between a sense of the future and how education might better prepare people for what is anticipated. Elsewhere, thinking emerged about not being too doom-laden with students, but rather teaching to empower them to know they can act, while still respecting their own concerns.

A child-centred approach was strongly evident in their school designs where curriculum, campus and relationships to community indicated changes that could well be transformative of schooling, and which picked up well on social aspects of sustainability. Participants felt it was important not to scaremonger with children but to work with a can-do approach.

At a personal level, many in C2 and some in C1 were clearly ready for a turning point in their careers, having a sense of a different future and wanting a new challenge that allowed new ways of thinking. For C1 too this was evident, particularly in the adoption of some of the activities and techniques used in the training into their own practice. These called on very different learning styles, taking most out of their comfort zone at one point or another. Many felt in the 'learner experience', where they were not fully cognizant of what was coming next in the programme, and were discomfited by that apparent powerlessness. This led to identifying with the children and intentions to change practice as a result, such as adopting the routine of 'check-ins'.

The 'community of enquiry' raised the centrality of questioning and critical thinking as skills for creative responses to the future and unknowns. The sense of being lost, and playing with what that might mean in terms of uncertainties about the future, emerged in both iterations as a main theme for enquiry.

The 'how' of leadership rather than the 'what' was not seen by either group as a priority in the programme. There were, however, examples of creative approaches emerging from C2 showing how they were using the experiences of Leading for the Future to further develop their leadership practices. C1's input was not so conceptually bold or far-reaching, which is probably a reflection of the different mix of roles and responsibilities between the two cohorts.

#### OBJECTIVE 4

To inspire participants to lead transformational change for sustainability in their own lives and organisations.

There wasn't a specific set of activities designed to meet this objective, but rather the journey of the whole programme aimed to inspire transformational change.

The issue of how well this objective was met is open to broad interpretation and requires some unpicking of meanings, for example, of 'lead'. This was differently understood by participants in C1, who perceived themselves as lacking power in many cases and for whom leadership was more readily equated with influence. Whereas participants in C2, who were mostly in formal leadership status, saw themselves as having significant agency.

Equally, the meaning of 'transformational change for sustainability' is not an explicit descriptor and can be easily contested. The intention in this project was to be open and non-judgmental, and to inspire and awaken a deeper consciousness of self and of the issues facing us all. Given this intention, being evangelistic or promoting prescriptions for change would have been inappropriate. The action research, however, was clearly seeking deep-seated personal learning and commitment to transformational change rather than offering a more conventional course on educational leadership.

If this objective was centrally about inspiring and motivating, the evidence does suggest that the objective was well met. There is real energy for change from almost all of the participants and this is substantiated by the evidence of what they are doing or planning.

If it is about personal transformation, equally it appears to have succeeded. Many from both cohorts intimated individually, and within their group, that they had been transformed to some degree. For a few in C2 it was not a transformative experience, but rather a clarification and affirmation of their existing values, what they felt was important, and a chance to plan and challenge more vigorously their methods and approaches.

If it is about leading more transformational, radical and deep-seated changes to education and schools, it is harder to judge, but the evidence is more of adjustments and small-scale change at this stage. Figure 5, *Participants' activities following the Leading for the Future programme* (page 27) which is based on The National College's framework of developing and embedding sustainability in schools, indicates a wide range of planned actions by members of the cohorts, some of which might be judged to be transformational. Others might be informed by ambitions, which in time may lead to more profound change. Discourse from many participants did not indicate that such radical change was envisioned or sought at this stage.

This table provides a few examples of C1 and C2 participants' planned activities taken from the various forms and placed into The National College's framework of developing and embedding sustainability within a school.

This framework suggests that there are four stages of this development: beginner, performer, leader and pioneer, as well as three phases of innovation as schools make the transition from one stage to another.

In brief, this objective has largely been achieved, but with inevitable questions about the meaning of transformational change, and about the mix of participants.

## OBJECTIVE 5

To encourage participants to sustain their will to act in their immediate situation and beyond through relationship with others, and to create or join networks and communities of practice.

Within the programme two sessions were explicitly related to this objective: the 'act of will', and the final interactive, evaluative task. These activities appeared to help many to define what they were going to do, informed by their heightened and adjusted sense of what they felt was important. In both sessions examples of planned actions in schools were offered. The table helps to indicate whether they might be transformational or not. This is a tentative classification and further investigation would be highly desirable for research purposes, and for sustaining the development of these actions and plans.

The supportive group dynamic in both instances was considered of great importance by all, and it seems that sets of relationships and smaller support groups have emerged spontaneously from the wider group. Time will tell, but so far these look very likely to offer ongoing support to sustain the action. This could be vital to dealing with the constraining factors that participants were aware of back at their places of work. For C1, ultimately the understanding of the 'I' and building of self belief was vital to energise ability and effort to deal with the 'We' in the context of the school, and in influencing what happens.

The close interaction and open dialogue between the delivery team and the participants was valued highly by C1 but was less successful with C2, where numbers changed the dynamic. The

team deliberately chose to hold back to avoid running over time. More interaction, however, was desired by C2 and the role of team members in joining in discussions to add their experience and expertise needed to be more assured. The success of these interactions may well affect engagement with subsequent supportive activities to maintain the energy for change generated by the events.

Basecamp was established for group members to maintain contact with each other and the team. This was well used initially by CI but not by C2. Some in C2 were keen to have 'takeaway' resources, practical solutions and methods to apply and work on with others as a product from the training. This might justify their time out and the expense by having more visible outcomes and tangible artefacts to share with colleagues.

Undoubtedly the intention to act for change and the sense of personal agency is there. Whether that can be sustained in the face of external barriers and pressures to conform to established systems is not known. Nor do we know what is needed to sustain the energy for change. The evaluators, therefore, do not feel they can say whether this objective has been achieved. Further long-term research is strongly recommended to establish the evidence.

*“There’s strength in numbers. We form ideas. We came as 12 from all over England, but we have said more in this group in a very deep way that we don’t say to colleagues.”*

*“It is very rare to have time to really reflect on philosophy, practice and vision. This is a vital aspect of the programme.”*

*“Eco/sustainability has become much more of a focus. I am much more aware of where goods I am choosing to buy are from, and I am spending time researching the full facts about the many issues.”*

*“Quite challenging, but it really confirmed that any socio-political system depends on the values of its members. Society is not out there, but in us.”*

*“It is always good to question alternative strategies, rather than pursue headlong down a path. Create crossroads and stops on the journey.”*

*“The milking parlour... the profound experience of reconnecting with the natural world through hands, head, heart.”*

*“It’s difficult to see the connections between sometimes, and it’s the connections that are the things of value, more than the things themselves. If you are aware of the connection between things, it feels more healthy, integrative and positive.”*

Pilot participants' feedback

## Participants' activities following the Leading for the Future programme

Figure 5

This table provides a few examples of C1 and C2 participants' planned activities taken from the various forms and placed into The National College's framework of developing and embedding sustainability within a school. This framework suggests that there are four stages of this development: beginner, performer, leader and pioneer, as well as three phases of innovation as schools make the transition from one stage to another.

	<b>Beginner</b> Understanding of and interest in sustainability. Comply to sustainability legislation.	<b>Performer</b> Good projects and practices on the ground. Senior level buy-in and high pupil engagement.	<b>Leader</b> Sustainability supports school improvement. Working across whole school.	<b>Pioneer</b> Systematically working to create a sustainable future.
<b>Practice development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt more eco-friendly ways of using resources.</li> <li>• Develop the school grounds.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replicate woodland activities with children.</li> <li>• Use student voice more in planning the curriculum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use check-ins regularly with my class to assess their emotional state before lessons.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link students' view to wider community on water resources.</li> <li>• Inspire action to improve local situation.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic integration</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a sustainable development policy and guidelines.</li> <li>• Look beyond the village.</li> <li>• Look at diversity in my 100 per cent white British school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange a whole school INSET with Commonwork at Bore Place.</li> <li>• Develop the whole curriculum in my new school to include learning outdoors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link Eco-warriors across schools.</li> <li>• Action plan for whole school sustainability involving the wider community.</li> </ul>
<b>Transformation</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen better to senior management team and use check-ins with them.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure children know what lies ahead of them and how we all need to take action now.</li> <li>• Adopt methods to enable children to cope with uncertainty and change.</li> </ul>

## Key learning for the future

Figure 6

<b>Key learning for the future</b>	
<b>Suggested improvements to the programme to help deepen exploration in all aspects of sustainability.</b>	
<b>Economic</b>	Understand the local and national context. Consider unequal development. Question conventional thinking.
<b>Social</b>	Look beyond immediate peer group. Consider peers in the profession and community. Question global relationships.
<b>Individual/personal</b>	Apply ongoing self-awareness
<b>Environmental</b>	Understand and pursue local action. Address greenwash in supply chains. Tackle global issues.
<b>Political</b>	Reflect on personal agency. Understand educational power structures. Question global power relationships.

Chart concept: Jane Buckley Sander and Fay Blair

© Tide Global Learning [www.tidegloballearning.org](http://www.tidegloballearning.org)

Figure 7

<b>Leading for the future</b>	
<b>Evidence of achieving aspects of the aims. This chart shows where participants appeared to be in their understanding of the different aspects of sustainability.</b>	
<b>Economic</b>	Evidence of understanding the economic dimension.
<b>Social</b>	Evidence of understanding the social dimension was limited to the immediate cohort and school context.
<b>Individual/personal</b>	Evidence of understanding the 'I' was strong, but with limited connection to the socio-political world.
<b>Environmental</b>	Evidence of understanding the environmental dimension.
<b>Political</b>	Evidence of understanding the political dimension.

Chart concept: Jane Buckley Sander and Fay Blair

© Tide Global Learning [www.tidegloballearning.org](http://www.tidegloballearning.org)

## 5 Learning for the future

From the evidence gathered and the findings offered, the evaluators have made a number of recommendations for the development of future programmes of this kind. These recommendations may also inform other organisations and teams wanting to explore and develop their own programmes along the lines of Leading for the Future.

### PARTNERSHIP AND TEAM

The experience and diversity of the delivery team has been a strength, and this could be maximised for future teams with greater mutual awareness of each team member's own value-driven perspectives and views. Dedicated time together for team development is essential to build such in-depth understanding for any group attempting to deliver this complex programme effectively.

The learning about the essential qualities, experience and roles required of a delivery team needs further articulation and trialling to enable the effective rolling out of future programmes and teams.

The roles of each partner organisation in the team also need clarifying for the future, both in sustaining the impetus with the participants from the two cohorts, and in disseminating the learning and rolling out the programme as intended.

### THE PROGRAMME AND TRANSFERABILITY

The offer of carefully hosted space and the mix and balance between head, heart and hands activities should be maintained. So too should the tone of the facilitation and relationship between partners and participants learning together. It is important to recognise and acknowledge that there are different ways of addressing sustainability and that these can be explored through critical thinking and a non-didactic approach, and with sensitivity to the realities of individual situations. Blend and nuance is both powerful and essential for this programme in bringing together different strands of thought and exploring a range of solutions.

The delivery team needs to interact with the participants and to take on the role of critical thinkers, questioning, exploring and challenging views. These roles, if geared to helping participants collectively solve problems and find solutions relevant to each unique context, are highly valued by participants who want to learn from each other and the team.

Facilitation is best held by one person who is able to moderate and re-balance for any perceived bias, to draw on the strengths and knowledge of the delivery team and participants, to facilitate reflection on the links between activities, and on the relevance and transferability of learning into participants' situations.

There is also a need for clarification of the stated aims and objectives, and the articulation of the 'journey' that participants are invited to take so that learning outcomes are clearer. This would also help with identifying the purpose of each activity, and therefore with making any necessary decisions about priorities if on-the-spot changes are required in order to be responsive to participants' needs. Such flexibility maximises the chance of being appropriately adaptable to the particular needs and orientations of a group of participants. Having a range of activities with options and choices would equally enable such adaptability.

See figure 6, *Key learning for the Future*.

Some refinement of the balance of the programme's activities would address the concern expressed that the focus on 'I' was perhaps at the expense of the 'We' and 'Planet'. This might be handled by offering further follow-up events that extend the exploration of 'We' and 'Planet'.

In line with this there is scope either for more activity or more facilitated reflection, focused on understanding systems thinking, including environmental, political, social and economic at a national and global level. These should also include exploring future scenarios, educational paradigms, and leadership and change models. The chart suggests how a programme could help to develop an effective leadership for sustainability by moving such exploration towards deeper thinking in all aspects of sustainability.

The desire for 'takeaway resources' could be handled by offering materials to support such development after each session to build up a sense of 'usefulness' without losing the journey.

## TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience for the programme needs further thought as it is rolled out. Is it to create new and more leaders or to strengthen those with initial interest and commitment? Is it for educational practitioners or those in formal leadership positions already? Could it be offered to other leaders outside education? Given that the programme worked extremely well with very positive outcomes, particularly for C1, perhaps this audience is right, whereas for C2 type participants, maybe the programme needs some adjustments.

The 'value for money' judgement for any future costed programme is an issue. The time out required for this training is a very heavy commitment for a working teacher or head, and suggests that clarity about the benefits and how it will empower them, will be essential. The promotional material needs to be clear about both the programme and its potential for long-term outcomes and benefits, and this needs to meet participants' expectations.

Both cohorts had a strong sense of a role in helping to develop the programme, and therefore an ownership of it. These participants would be good advocates in promoting future events and valuable 'critical friends' in developing the programme further.

## FURTHER RESEARCH

Measurement of the longer-term effect of Leading for the Future and whether the personal changes and affirmations have enabled significant institutional change has not yet been possible. Further research is therefore strongly recommended before the success of this programme can be truly assessed. For example, it would be very interesting to find out whether there has been any effect on general standards and on school improvement to support the findings of Ofsted and The National College, which have shown how leaders for sustainability tended to be successful leaders in general.

*“Working more effectively in partnership and collaboration is the only way to make the quantum leaps required.”*

*“I have extended my circle of supporters and mentors through Leading for the Future.”*

## 6 In summary

There are a number of themes emerging from the analysis of the aims and objectives. Overall these have been well met and the experience of the participants in both cohorts was very positive. This is strongly evidenced by the majority of the participants who would recommend the course to others.

There are, however, some significant differences between the evaluative feedback from the two groups, which may reflect their different composition and group size. The second cohort expressed a desire to explore more the realities of some of their individual situations and how to relate the ideas emerging about leading for sustainability to these specific contexts. Several wanted models of learning and tools for development to take away, maybe in order to maximise the value and benefits for their whole school, and to justify the time taken to attend the course.

There was also a sense of impatience with the balance of activities, with many C2 members wanting to spend less time on the 'I' and the natural world, and more time on the 'We' and the 'Planet' in terms of their socio-political worlds and the wider political world. For some it may have been that the 'I' was related too much to the emotional self with reflection focusing on how they felt rather than what they thought. For others it was the seeking of practical relevance that led to the desire to move on from the self faster than the course was designed to do. The tensions between the emotive and the cognitive were perhaps felt more by the group of senior leaders; this may be because in their leadership roles they are operating more within a wider socio-political context and are accustomed to tackling and being responsible for solutions to problems faced in their schools, with less time and space to focus on the self. Many demonstrated great self awareness but did not readily want to dedicate time to the self or their accomplishments; rather they communicated a strong sense of collective achievements of their schools.

A principle underpinning the purpose and design of this project is an awareness of the need to bring emotional intelligence and energy into learning and change for sustainability; thus it is likely there will always be this tension for some participants. Many acknowledged, however, on reflection that it is critical to make the investment in the 'I', to create a solid foundation to move out from and to connect with the external world of 'We' and 'Planet'.

There was also some concern under Objective 2 about the level of understanding participants had of the wider and deeper aspects of sustainability. In part this is due to the time constraints of the sessions, a point also made in some evaluations, which suggested that the course was too short. Again there is a tension here for the project team as there is a limit to how much can be packed in to a few days. But making the course longer is likely to have a significant impact on recruitment as it is very difficult for schools to release staff for several days at a time. The time commitment was often cited by possible participants as the reason they could not join the programme. It may be more realistic to develop further a facilitation that enables a broader and wider ranging discussion and debate to encompass different ideas about how sustainability can be embedded within a school community.

Finally, some aims and objectives are only partially achieved to date. This is not surprising as it takes time to move from changing oneself to changing others. The real impact of this project on the wider education system will only be apparent in a few years' time when participants have been able to identify, initiate and implement their own change projects. For this reason, it is vital that there is an opportunity for further contact with these participants in the future.

Despite the questions discussed above, both the participants and the project team felt that the pilot was very successful and worthwhile. The lessons learnt will be used to inform future plans for this approach to leadership development.

*“We must prepare our young people to be resilient and able to make conscious and reflective decisions about their lives, and how what they may do will affect others.”*

*“My shift in thinking has been a surprise, even to me. I am now the one questioning every bit of waste, every purchase we make, every journey, both at home and at work. I know that I need to learn more and I am keen to educate myself further. I feel an acute sense of urgency, which is driving me to move quickly. I suddenly feel that there is no longer time to waste.”*

*“We must prepare our young people to be resilient and able to make conscious and reflective decisions about their lives, and how what they may do will affect others.”*

*“My shift in thinking has been a surprise, even to me. I am now the one questioning every bit of waste, every purchase we make, every journey, both at home and at work. I know that I need to learn more and I am keen to educate myself further. I feel an acute sense of urgency, which is driving me to move quickly. I suddenly feel that there is no longer time to waste.”*

Pilot participants' feedback

# 7 References

- Beddington (2009) *Food, Energy, Water and the Climate: A Perfect Storm of Global Events?* Government Office for Science
- Bottery, M. (2005). *The Challenges of Education Leadership*. Paul Chapman Publishing
- Brundtland (1987) *Our Common Future*. World Commission on Environment and Development, Oxford University Press
- Buckley Sander, J and Bracewell, J (2011) *Habitats and Humanity*. Commonwork
- Buckley Sander, J (2008-2011) *The Harvest: Evaluating the Sustainable and Global Schools Learning Network*. Commonwork
- Court, G (2011) *Hosted Space*. The Circle Works and Commonwork
- Crompton, T (2010) *Common Cause*. WWF Available online at: <http://cc-wg.org/>
- Dixon, D (2009) *Developing a Green Leaders' Model for Primary Schools*. Ed D. in Education Leadership, University of Lincoln. Available online at: <http://eprints.lincoln.ac.uk/2184>
- Fullan, M (2003) *The Moral Imperative of School Leadership*. A joint publication between Ontario Principals' Council and Corwin Press
- Jackson, L (2008) *Leading Sustainable Schools: What the Research Tells Us*. National College for School Leadership
- Ofsted (2009) *Education for Sustainable Development: Improving Schools, Improving Lives*. Available online at: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources)
- National College of School Leadership (2011) *The Journey of Sustainable Schools: Developing and Embedding Sustainability*.
- Plowden, B (1967) *Children and their Primary Schools: A Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England)*. HMSO
- Riddiford, J (2010) *I, We, The Planet: Beyond the Cover Story*. Global Generation.
- TIDE (Teachers in Development Education). *Development Compass Rose* [www.tidegloballearning.net](http://www.tidegloballearning.net)
- Vare and Scott (2007) *Education for Sustainable Development: Two Sides and an Edge*. DEA Thinkpiece
- Webster, K and Johnson, C (2008) *Sense and Sustainability: Educating for a Low Carbon World*. TerraPretta
- West-Burnham, J (2002) 'Leadership and Spirituality' seminar paper given at National College for School Leadership

## Hosted Space: a definition

The term 'Hosted Space' emerged from the practice and experience of The Circle Works, a Commonwork project set up to provide opportunities for reflection in the heart of East London. Geoffrey Court, honorary director of The Circle Works writes: *What defines hosted space is not just the presence of a host and a space, but the relationship between the two. The 'person' is not simply occupying the 'place' like a caretaker staying on the premises until it's time to lock up, but inhabiting it expressively, responding to it and ordering it in ways that reflect something of themselves and their intentions. A hosted space is created mindfully, and to enter it is to encounter a mind.*

## A 'solo': a definition:

It is unclear where the term 'solo' was first used in relation to modern psychological and wilderness practice, but the practice itself has a long and multi-cultural history (Foster and Little, 1992). A solo is essentially a reflective or meditative period alone in an isolated natural environment. In many indigenous cultures, this kind of practice was used as a portal moment between adolescence and adulthood, or for ceremonial and transformative purposes. In modern times, 'solos' are facilitated by wilderness practitioners and also therapists and youth workers, mainly for the purposes of helping people who want to face their problems, or encouraging personal change on some level. The two main functional aspects of the solo are firstly, a long period spent in an unfamiliar environment, and secondly, the potential challenge of that environment in coping with the weather, animals, dangers and natural threats which could present a risk. Coping with these is seen to strengthen leadership and self-belief, and the space to reflect on and speak about those things creates a space for change in participants.

# 8 The participants

## COHORT 1: OCTOBER AND DECEMBER 2010

Susan Cooper

Bligh Junior School, Strood, Kent

Emma Cottingham

Bowbridge Primary School, Newark, Notts

Ruth Guy-Clarke

Dovecote Primary School, Clifton, Notts

Angela Hesselgrave

Medway Council, Rochester, Kent

Kathy Hutt

St Matthew's Infant School, Cobham, Surrey

David Webster

Bowbridge Primary School, Newark, Notts

## COHORT 2: MARCH AND MAY 2011

Julia Daine

Killamarsh Infant and Nursery School, Sheffield

Bryan Davies

Head of Sustainable Development, Ofsted

Martin Frampton

Leigh North Street Junior School, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex

Claire Lindsay

Crompton View Primary School, Bilsthorpe, Notts

Anne Lowry

West Kent Alternative Curriculum PRU

Ian Mellor

Eckington Secondary School, Eckington, Derbyshire

Caroline Owen

St James's CE Junior School, Littleover, Derby

Dr AS Fred Paterson

Head of Knowledge and Learning, National College for School Leadership

Andrew Perkins

Dovecote Primary School, Clifton, Notts

Clifford Perry

Asterdale Primary School and Spondon Children's Centre, Spondon, Derby

Simon Wood

The Southwater Junior Academy, Horsham, West Sussex

Val Woods

St Michael's CE Primary School, Ascot, Berkshire

The report is also available to download from [www.commonwork.org](http://www.commonwork.org), [wwf.org.uk](http://wwf.org.uk), or [www.connected-leaders.org](http://www.connected-leaders.org)

For further information or to discuss future plans, please contact Jacqueline Leach, Commonwork, [jacqueline@commonwork.org](mailto:jacqueline@commonwork.org) or Zaria Greenhill, WWF-UK, [zgreenhill@wwf.org.uk](mailto:zgreenhill@wwf.org.uk)

Written by Jane Buckley Sander and Fay Blair, 2011  
Edited by Julia Bracewell, Commonwork

