

RCE Severn Steering Group Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 20th October 10.00 – 11.00am Park Campus, University of Gloucestershire, Cheltenham

Attendees:

Dr John Blewitt (JB), Dr Alex Ryan (AR), Megan Baker (MB), Georgina Smith (GS), Gareth Parry (GP), Katherine Foot (KF), Paul Warwick (PW)

Apologies:

Ruth Corral (RC), Marcus Green (MG), John Henry Looney (JHL), Kevin Bailey (KB), Paul Thomas (PT)

Minutes prepared by MB, meeting chaired by JB.

1. Welcome and introductions

Round table of introductions and welcome to PW on his first time attending a steering group meeting

2. Actions and updates since last meeting

MB updated the group on the activities and news since the July meeting.

- **Rural Community Energy Fund:** An event around the RCEF had been proposed in collaboration with the Cheltenham Green Doors (CGD) Open homes weekend in September, however due to lack of availability of CGD organisers this event was cancelled/ put on-hold. The steering group agreed that any activity JHL would like to take forward by Sustainable Direction Ltd could be supported by RCE Severn and information on RCEF will be shared on RCE Severn web pages and social media, however as there were no comments from RCE Severn members in response to the sharing of this in the newsletter no further event will be pushed forward.
- **RCE annual reporting and award submissions:** MB is currently finalising the annual report for submission to the RCE UNU-IAS secretariat in Japan. This is submitted annually by RCE Coordinators globally in order to update the secretariat and other RCEs on activities, news and developments.
Two projects have been nominated for the RCE global awards:
“Employability-*plus* training for students in sustainability” – acknowledging the role RCE Severn partners and the University have played in developing students’ skills for sustainability through the lens of employability with placements and internships.

“University Educators for Sustainable Development” – A European project led by the University of Gloucestershire/RCE Severn which brings together 53 partners in 33 countries, aiming to strengthen the contribution of higher education makes to sustainability through learning and professional development.

Results of the RCE Global awards will be announced in early 2016.

- **Social Media:** A Facebook page and Twitter page for University of Gloucestershire Sustainability and RCE Severn. We would like to generate more traffic to these pages and therefore aim to meet the interests of our wide audience including RCE Severn regional partners, students and staff at the University. Steering group members agreed to work in cross-fertilising information on social media. It was highlighted we should ensure we work towards quality not quantity with postings and recognised that content should reach out to the audience rather than focussing purely on the page host organisations.

Facebook: UniGlos Sustainability

Twitter: @uniglossustain

3. Projects and collaboration

Arts Project – “Sharing the Planet in the Anthropocene”

Following introduction to the idea of this project in July’s RCE Severn newsletter, one photo essay has been received which could be used to ‘set the scene’ for this project. The aim the arts project is to engage a wide range of groups in sustainability/ futures thinking. Community groups, arts students and academics, interested individuals and educational organisations will be invited to participate. The submissions will provide a series of both physical and virtual exhibitions with the best ‘entries’ being selected by a nominated curator to be exhibited in physical exhibition spaces.

We need to agree upon and organise venues for exhibitions, spaces suggested included: Cheltenham Science Festival, Plymouth University, University of Gloucestershire (during the June University Festival), coffee shops, and hospital spaces. **Any further suggestions would be appreciated.**

The web space for this online exhibition has been offered by the University of Gloucestershire Sustainability Department which is in the process of developing a new website for the new year (2016).

PW raised that Plymouth University ran a photography competition last year themed around sustainability/environment through the Institute of Sustainable Solutions Research. This was useful for getting students to engage and clearly has the potential to connect staff and students from the arts faculties to this agenda. The project took considerable administrative time and resource. For 2016 Plymouth University is looking to sources of possible funding connected to induction week/ widening participation in order to help with the printing costs of this becoming a physical exhibition. Plymouth had a judging panel for submissions with a prize for best submission.

For RCE Severn to overcome issues of funding it was acknowledged MB should commit some time to approaching businesses for prizes and applying for grants to fund the running of this project. MB will discuss with Arts colleagues at UoG regarding resources for physical exhibitions.

UoG photography and journalism colleagues have been in talks with AR regarding a social justice project, drawing together stories, context and interpretation as part of a student-led curriculum activity. These students and colleagues will be invited to contribute to the arts project. External organisations connected with UoG arts department will also be invited to connect.

It will also be necessary to ensure this project reaches out to the wider public to avoid the general trend of preaching to the converted (GP). Local media should be approached and journalism students to promote the value-added of this project and raise awareness to it.

Actions:

- ***MB to produce briefing paper on this project for sharing with potential sponsorship leads***
- ***Submissions to open before Christmas***
- ***MB and AR will link with UoG Arts colleagues***
- ***JB will link with Martha Fiennes (digital artist)***
- ***Dates need to be confirmed and location of physical exhibitions = final exhibition/celebration proposed for May/ June***
- ***Any RCE Steering group members with ideas for exhibition spaces to engage the wider public or ideas for framing the project, please contact MB, JB, AR.***
- ***MB and AR will meet with JB before Christmas to discuss actions going forward***

COP21 (Paris Climate Change Talks – activities amongst RCE Severn members)

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust are linking with the Gloucester Diocese for a 'Greener Gloucestershire walk on 21st November for COP21 to raise awareness of the impacts of climate change and actions people can take. Each organisation involved will be connecting with their chosen tag line. This will be a walk from Gloucester Cathedral to Robinswood Hill. ***More information on this will be shared in the November RCE Severn newsletter.***

Plymouth University Students' Union are running a two day climate change conference and taking a group of students to Paris. They are also toying with the idea of a moor2sea bike ride themed around sustainability and climate change with bus stops/ think pieces and discussion points along the way. This could be shared on the RCE Severn webspace.

JB mentioned work by Schumacher Institute fellows Jenneth Parker and Lucy Ford. They have recently released a paper on climate change connected with Paris 2015, which they could present on if RCE Severn is interested. Schumacher Institute is keen to partner more closely with RCE Severn and UK RCE networks therefore this provides a tangible opportunity to do so. MB recently attended a Schumacher Institute researchers and fellows meeting where colleagues were interested in finding opportunities for collaboration with RCE Severn.

4. University of Gloucestershire update (AR)

The University is now in a consultation process for establishing strategic priorities for UoG around sustainability in the future. The review of UoGs sustainability strategy 2009 – 2015 was released in spring 2015, followed by an external panel report identifying useful entry points going forward. We want to ask RCE members some more direct questions about how we can work together most effectively in the future. ***A Prezi presentation and some direct questions will be shared by email before Christmas.*** The Prize will provide a basis for which members can feedback on.

UoG has been leading on a 3 year ERASMUS EC funded project, “University Educators for Sustainable Development”, focussed on professional development around Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The project is higher education focussed but has a strong training element which could support other organisations; there may be opportunity in the coming year for an RCE Severn event themed around this project, inviting staff development managers from colleges and universities, connecting with the EAUC on this could also help. An online platform has been launched providing sharing of best practice from across Europe.

5. AOB

AR is having conversations with John Lear at University of Worcester to discuss food, health and well-being agendas between the two universities, potential opportunity here to link with NHS partners. Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust has successfully done a lot of work linked to this with social housing projects in the past three years – opportunity to connect with health sector and wildlife trust sector on food, health and well-being.

GS – The solar feed in tariff will change this year.

GP – One organisation in the South West has been awarded a grant from the Our Environment Our Future, Big Lottery Fund, which will be announced in the coming months.

6. Next meeting

Next meeting to be in the New Year, MB will organise a Doodle poll to establish availability – any suggestions on venue for this would be appreciated.