

## Event Feedback

In June 2014, I decided to do something to find out, in my own small way, if there was a better way to help younger generations of teachers to follow their interest in sustainability and global education. I hoped it might be possible for them to start on their journey where my generation leaves off rather than starting out once again, back where we began, as most of them currently seem to do, with little evidence of progress having been made in between. **Growing Up Green & Global** was the result.

I want to express a huge thank you to everyone who came to Harper Adams University on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2015 for the **Growing Up Green & Global Conference and Exhibition** whether as a speaker, a guest, a delegate or as an exhibitor. I have listened, analysed and pondered on all the comments I received during the planning and execution of this event whether verbally, via email, phone or feedback forms.

My objectives included finding out if an event of this kind could be delivered successfully as a self-funded activity covering reasonable costs and staff time. Anecdotally, I was told it couldn't be done on more than one occasion and there appeared to be no evidence of any event of this kind being initiated by a small scale provider. There was expectation that major sponsorship would be essential and/or pupil involvement and attendance required on the day for it to be viable. I was told that organisations and schools would not pay although it had not been tried in the way I was proposing. I believed that providing costs were kept in reason that it would be possible to organise a sector focused event at a fraction of the cost necessary to obtain space at larger education shows and where all attendees would be interested in what was on offer.

The key ambition was always to increase awareness of schools to the multiple schemes available to them from the many providers of sustainability and global education but which many schools are totally unaware of. This is often caused by problems in making any contact with the most appropriate people on the school staff. This event was never going to involve pupils, this was for staff looking to find support for their work at an event where they were not under pressure to care for their pupils and where they could gain most for the smallest outlay of time and money.

I hoped to demonstrate that when all other means are not working, this can be a worthwhile and effective means of raising the profile of sustainability and global education providers as well as making those essential new school contacts. I am aware that a number of you will understand that there can be nothing more soul-destroying than knowing that the services of your organisation are needed in schools yet you cannot keep going as a viable company. You then have to oversee the loss of dedicated and passionate specialists as they are made redundant, not because they are not needed but because you can't get to speak with the right people. It becomes ever more difficult to explain what you do and how it contributes to school ethos and achievement. If this event helps any organisation approaching this sort of predicament, it will have been time well spent.

### General feedback

One very clear message comes across very clearly indeed. The event ticked boxes very successfully for everyone involved. There are a few minor reservations (but not many), some suggestions (largely as expected) and almost unanimous confirmation that it was a worthwhile occasion.

*Any opinions expressed in this document are entirely my own as is the interpretation of the accumulated feedback scoring. **If you wish to add anything please do feel free to get in touch and share your thoughts and suggestions especially if you still have your feedback form!***

### Pre-event booking and venue (sections 2-7)



Delegates scored this very highly as did most exhibitors although exhibitors had a greater spread of scores. The vast majority of delegates opted to give the highest score of 5 on most categories while

some exhibitors were a little more circumspect. Those issues which were raised more than once are given below with responses.

- **Why Shropshire?**

**Ans.** Schools in this mainly rural area rarely have anything organised nearby due to the scattered location of the schools compared to their more urban neighbours. Recently, there has been the loss of the local global education centre and both local authorities have removed their sustainable school support. There are just a small number of NGO/ third sector/sole trader providers in the area who might be considered as competing for the attention of schools. Basically, if an event could be successful here, it could be repeated elsewhere.

- **Why Harper Adams University with its' rural location?**

**Ans.** Harper Adams has a reputation for supporting sustainability and, like other universities throughout the country, is seeking new ways to achieve links with local schools. There was never any hesitation in their willingness to provide a venue for this event to the extent that they offered the facilities for free. This enabled costs to be kept down and is something that could be repeated elsewhere. Services such as lunch and refreshments, power supplies and board hire were all paid for.

- **Why Friday near the start of term?**

**Ans.** Harper Adams could only make their generous offer before their own students arrived on campus. An attempt was made to get a politician to attend and this is only usually possible on a constituency day when they venture away from Westminster i.e. Friday. With an election looming at the time, a decision about the day of the week had to be made long before any invitations could be sent out. In the end, Nicky Morgan MP, Owen Paterson MP and Lucy Powell MP were invited but all refused.

### **Arrangements on the day (sections 8-13)**

There were issues throughout the day caused largely by the late arrival of a significant number of delegates who had misjudged their travelling times to the rural location, compounded by fog in some areas. The separation of the lecture theatre and the exhibition came about as a result of the growth in exhibitor numbers during the planning stage resulting in the need for a re-assessment and a decision to move to the larger display area. The role of the student ambassadors was well received for their excellent assistance during the day in so many ways.

- **Micro-workshops (section 9 or 10)**

Micro-workshops were suggested as a means to allow organisations to demonstrate the kind of approach they might use with a school group. By not arranging the more usual but time consuming full workshops, this would allow smaller organisations to have a more equal chance to show their skills and abilities to local schools.

In practice, the delegate numbers were not great enough to test this approach properly and one-to-one conversations were the most usual exchanges. It was interesting to observe the different approach taken by those organisations providing educational specialist advice compared with those companies providing more technical commercial expertise. The former had attractive, engaging stands staffed by often exuberant people while the latter were more functional as they might expect to be in a more traditional trade show environment.

4	2	1	2	3	0
3	2	0	0	6	2

- **Question panels (sections 10 or 11).**

There was mixed reaction to the question panels between those who wanted to get there and missed the announcements and those that did take part and wanted more time. A couple of exhibitors seemed to feel this would be their chance to promote their own agenda as in the traditional workshop. The question panels were never intended to be workshops by another name because this was an opportunity for delegates to ask questions. It was not the place to be told what they could do by a company representative promoting their offers as this could be obtained easily enough at the relevant stalls in the hall. The delegate feedback

was clearly much higher than the exhibitors and this opportunity was very welcome. Perhaps a screened off area of the main hall could be considered another time.

4	0	1	0	4	2
1	0	0	3	6	5

- **Recommending the event (sections 1,8,11-13).**

All delegates returning feedback forms indicated that they would wholeheartedly recommend the event to colleagues and although only a couple would have paid double, there was universal belief that they had had value for money from the day.

Exhibitors were a little more cautious but the majority indicated they would wish to attend similar events again particularly if held in another area and they felt they had had reasonable/good value for money. There was a wish to have more delegates present in future although there was also recognition that this is not an easy task. There was awareness that all delegates already had an interest in the subject matter and numbers actively following up on contacts compared to a general education event would be watched closely in the coming weeks.

0	0	4	17	16	2
0	0	0	0	15	24

### Additional feedback comments

#### Best part for exhibitors

- Networking, networking and more networking
- Making new school contacts

#### Best part for delegates

- Idea generation from exhibitors
- Some speakers
- Question panels
- Meeting other passionate people

#### Worst part for exhibitors

- Too quiet, not enough delegates
- Friday

#### Worst part for delegates

- Delegates arriving late and the impact on the day, making some parts too rushed
- Nothing

### Extra thoughts

Most exhibitors clearly enjoyed the chance to meet each other and discover more about what everybody else is offering to schools. Was this due to curiosity, competitive instinct, funding alerts or partnership potential?

- If exhibitors are not sure what other providers are offering, what chance do schools have of building a coherent whole school approach by choosing what fits their needs most closely and who can provide their support.
- Who can advise them?
- Should providers be telling or training schools how to do things?
- Should teachers be dependent on the providers or develop their own expertise so they can do it for themselves?
- Once teachers have established what they want for themselves and their schools and know more clearly what they need, will it give providers a better chance to win funding?

### Some surprises and other issues

- The almost unanimous expression of networking value from exhibitors with other exhibitors.

- The degree of appreciation from delegates for the balance achieved between strategy and practicality.
- The degree to which school staff remain unaware of the difficulties experienced by providers trying to get their offers in to schools and of contacting the right people via school office communications in schools. They don't realise there is a problem to the extent it exists.
- The lack of research into the disconnect between why 4 out of every 5 students entering HE want sustainability as part of their studies, regardless of subject and yet secondary schools rarely engage in a whole school approach and lack role models for sustainability and global matters.

#### **Quotes – Delegates** (each quote is from a different individual and is attributable).

- “Not what I was expecting, it was much better. I now have a plan to move forward with.”
- “Really relevant and useful, loved the guest speakers this morning. Best conference of this type I've been to.”
- “We need more events like this.” (*CSS note – only secondary school present*)
- “Wonderfully helpful for inputs, enthusiasm & networking. Came away inspired.”
- “Great to hear people speaking honestly & passionately, schools being encouraged to make progress!”
- “A valuable opportunity to share knowledge, experience and inspiration to make a positive, sustainable impact in both schools and the wider world.”
- “As a school governor, the event has re-ignited my passion to move my school forward on the wider sustainability agenda.”
- “A great day, lovely to meet so many positive and enthusiastic people.”
- “I found the event refreshing and certainly worthwhile.”

#### **Quotes – Exhibitors** (each quote is from a different individual and is attributable).

- “Fantastic venue & ambitious aims. I've really enjoyed the day and met some wonderful people.”
- “Thanks for trying.”
- “A rare opportunity to personally network on environment and sustainability in an educational context.”
- “A good networking opportunity.”
- “Good events for schools such as **Growing Up Green & Global** rarely take place in Shropshire.”
- “A great gathering of green and global goers!!”
- “Really nice day. Nice relaxed atmosphere.”

#### **What next?**

**Growing Up Green & Global** is just a first step. The official film made on the day will be available within a few weeks and will provide the evidence to demonstrate what can be achieved by a one day event and I hope discussions can take place in relevant regional meetings. I will certainly be supportive of ways to repeat the event in the most cost effective way in other locations.

I have no intention at this stage of organising another event on my own but I have learnt a great deal during the journey and I would happily discuss ways ahead with any interested organisation and also share my experiences with other gatherings. I will continue to operate as Learning 2B Sustainable from an independent position so that I can freely express my own opinions, (**Growing Up Green & Global** is copyright registered as a company product).

**Growing Up Green & Global** has gained attention in numerous places and a number of additional organisations have asked me to keep them informed about developments. It has gained some notice and I have banners and documentation now prepared which do not need to be re-invented and there is an opportunity for wider discussion and possible partnership working. There is a chance to give our work a fresh and innovative injection of enthusiasm.

There seems to be some interest in a post-event twilight gathering of delegates to develop their thinking and begin to consider what they want to do next. I will probably offer to help for one session and act as an independent facilitator for such a meeting.

C. Scrutwood

Sept 25<sup>th</sup> 2015