

SCOTTISH EARTH SCIENCE EDUCATION FORUM
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
WENESDAY 3 DECEMBER 2003

NATIONAL MUSEUMS SCOTLAND, EDINBURGH

MINUTES

APOLOGIES

Geoffrey Boulton, Chris Browitt, Chris Burton, Colin Donaldson, Paul Ewing, Peter Harrison, Dan Hillier, George Meldrum, Jackie Yuill, Colin MacFadyen

PRESENT

Present: Neil Clark (NC), Colin Donaldson (CD), Colin Graham (CG), John Hull, Chris King (CK), Aubrey Manning (AM), Andrew McLeish (AMc), Suzanne Miller (SMi), Stuart Monro (SMo), Juliet Robertson (JR), Jon Turner (JT), Sylvia Jackson (SJ), Hamish Ross (HR)

WELCOME

Chris King, Juliet Robertson and Sylvia Jackson were welcomed to the Steering Committee. CG reported that Margot Watt would no longer be able to attend Steering committees but would be happy to continue to receive the paperwork.

MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

CG asked about the Royal Society of Edinburgh teacher placement project. HR reported that our plans for a one-year placement had not been realised, partly because the scheme was funded annually by SEED and the financial year did not correspond to the academic year, so RSE were not able to make a one year commitment. Also, the scheme went under review at the time.

CD was going to investigate with RSE.

CURRENT PROJECT MIX

HR outlined the current project mix under the headings of:

- Projects that have been running up to December 2003
- Projects to which we are committed up to December 2004
- Projects under consideration for 2004

Depending on what counted, between 100 and 400 teachers and trainee teachers had received some kind of professional development input from SESEF projects in 2003. SESEF's involvement in national projects using distributed networks of facilitators (such as Improving Science Education 5-14 and the Earth Science Education Unit's workshops) would probably result in greater numbers in 2004 even under the conservative counting regime.

HR noted that:

- funding for 2004 was yet to be confirmed
- he was fully committed from January-March 2004 year, was already holding-up progress on projects and increasingly unable to undertake core facilitation, networking and new project development work
- much of our work has been for teachers of 5-14 year olds and that there was some need to re-engage the post-14 teaching stakeholders who initially drove SESEF

JR suggested that the CPD materials were likely to be appreciated as they had the inclusive feature of being adaptable up and down the 5-14 attainment levels, especially in terms of skills. Skills was becoming an increasingly integrated part of the science curriculum in schools as part of organising progression between primary and secondary schools. In addition, the 'science in society'/Citizenship agenda were becoming more important. CK said that this was also the case in England and Wales.

NC suggested that SESEF needed to plan more than one year ahead, at least in order to show investors that there was a strategic vision.

CK suggested that the outline given might be the basis for a written report to Teaching Earth Sciences and GeoScience Review

FUTURES AND FINANCES

SM outlined the current financial situation:

- The SNH grant award was spent (£50,000)
- Some project funding was being generated by selling Development Officer time to projects (£13,000)
- Bids for core funding to SNH, and project funding to UKOOA and Scottish HEIs were being made
- The Development Officer also contributes a small amount of time to University of Edinburgh's teaching needs

SM indicated that:

- We were progressively moving towards making SESEF and its projects financially self-sustaining
- There was a difficult balance between the timing of project funding input and the availability of Development Officer time, to the extent that the employment of additional personnel would need to be seriously considered and planned for.
- JH suggested the lottery was a potential source of funds if we could establish the 'voluntary' or 'community' connections in projects.
- CG said that the University of Edinburgh Development Trust helped SESEF with its core funding applications and that educational trusts had been considered, however these are thought to offer bad effort-to-return ratios unless we had a strong feel for the probability of success.

ESTA CONFERENCE 2004

HR reported that:

- SESEF is organising the Earth Science Teachers' Association Conference at Herriot-Watt from the 17-19th September 2004
- There were risks for SESEF, who had to deliver for Scottish teachers to justify our investment in the project
- There were risks for ESTA, who had to ensure that at least their 'usual suspect' participants were prepared to travel to Edinburgh for the conference to ensure its financial viability, and had therefore asked for a reasonably similar programme to previous years
- There were, however, important gains to be had, it being much more sensible for SESEF to help ESTA develop its stake in Scotland (and among Geography teachers) than try to deliver the same benefits through a different, Scottish organisation (the same applies to ESEU CPD workshops)
- A post-14 curriculum analysis was underway to develop conference content that would suit a wide range of potential participants
- We were in the fortunate position of being able to draw on expertise from across Scotland
- Scottish HEI's should be encouraged to send representatives, at least because it represents an unusual opportunity to obtain recruitment intelligence

AMc offered to run SQA inset alongside the WJEC/OCR exam board in-service on the Friday afternoon.

E-LEARNING / RESOURCES / CPD

CPD was covered in the Current Project Mix item. SMi said that the Highland Environmental Network and Rangers services were important and willing potential contributors to the network.

NC reported that the 5-14 E-Learning group had concluded that we should wait to hear from Learning and Teaching Scotland, who were planning to help subject associations in due course.

In the meantime, NC has disbanded that group and assembled a new group to investigate how we might provide electronic services for the post-16 teaching fraternity.

SMi reported that the Museum was continuing to receive information concerning resource materials despite not having made a widespread call for them. There is so much that any effort to evaluate them would be unrealistic (and also this was not something NMS should do). AMc suggested that he could, however, and that a list of good resources could be prepared.

HR suggested that, at the 5-14 level at least, the Improving Science Education 5-14 project provided an excellent opportunity to distribute information concerning the best resources.

CURRICULUM REVIEW

HR outlined what was currently known about the forthcoming curriculum review:

- A review of assessment arrangements had already been undertaken
- The curriculum content review would cover ages 4-18 and was likely to consider 'holistic' approaches to education that would almost certainly down-play the significance of 'subjects' in the curriculum
- A review group had been assembled, on which subject specialists, including in science, were notably absent
- A consultation plan was being agreed and would be published in the New Year

Most of the public domain material concerning this can be found at:

http://www.tes.co.uk/search/search_display.asp?section=Archive&sub_section=Reviews&id=385390&Type=0

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/pages/news/2003/09/SEED300.aspx>

SMo drew the committee's attention to the Scottish Science Advisory Group's Education Report in this context.

HR suggested that an approach to the consultation exercise from the science community as a whole might be more influential than a range of competing views that could all be ignored.

JR said that, once a coherent view had been developed, we should use the SESEF network to impinge on the consultation from all levels of the education system.

It was suggested that the idea of Earth Science as a means of delivering a broader science curriculum that was relevant and related well to issues of citizenship was often mooted. Indeed, it was being tried in some parts of the English and Welsh curriculum. CK said that the latter had been loosened to allow for such initiatives to be examined.

CG said there was need for a meeting to think about a strategy for responding to the consultation process when it was unveiled. However this might be a matter for a wider body such as the Institute for Science Education in Scotland, who could perhaps be asked to consider the earth-science-umbrella approach.

AOCB

SMo is in negotiations with *GeoScientist* with a view to writing about SESEF

HR noted that a funding group needed to be re-formed.

NEXT MEETING

The next Steering Meeting will be in April 2004