



A BERA  
RESEARCH  
COMMISSION

# EDUCATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

## A MANIFESTO

A COMMUNITY GUIDE  
AUGUST 2021

# 2021



UNIVERSITY  
*of York*



Centre for Alternative Technology  
Canolfan y Dechnoleg Amgen





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# SUMMARY

Humanity faces a climate crisis. Education is needed to help the next generation to adapt and respond to challenges associated with the changing climate. Changes are needed to ensure that education meets the needs of teachers and young people in the context of sustainability. The British Educational Research Association (BERA) Research Commission 2021 brings together teachers and young people from across the UK to create a manifesto for change. This brief communicates headline messages for environmental education community organisations. The manifesto produced will be launched to coincide with COP26 the UN 2021 Climate Change Conference.



## ABOUT THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to analyse where we are now with education for environmental sustainability, what change is needed, and the barriers to this change. In May and June 2021, nine 2-hour online workshops were held, stimulated by provocations from young people and environmental educators. Responses from over 200 young people and teachers from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were received.



## KEY QUESTIONS

The questions the research commission set out to answer were:

- What is the current context for education for environmental sustainability, and what do we need?
- What can we learn from others' experiences of education for environmental sustainability?
- What could the future of education for environmental sustainability look like?



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Young people and teachers identified capabilities important in education for environmental sustainability. These include:

- Critical thinking, critical literacy, questioning and data literacy.
- Research, innovation and creativity.
- Communication including sharing ideas and disagreeing.
- Networking within and between schools and local communities.
- Connection with nature to promote health and wellbeing.

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Young people and teachers saw education for environmental sustainability as learning to live differently to protect, preserve and mend the environment for current and future generations.

# COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Young people and teachers identified solutions at different scales including those for the classroom, our schools, our local communities and at policy level, calling on the environmental education community to:



## **AWARD**

Create a no-cost, external, accredited award for students which has an environmental sustainability focus and which universities recognise. The award should value both individual and collective achievements.



## **HUBS**

Value schools as local hubs for sustainability where people from across the community (including alumni, staff, students, parents, siblings) can take part in and lead education, activities and build networks.



## **RECOGNISE**

Support and recognise teachers who work across networks of schools with award schemes to uplift collective action and the empowerment and support of others.



## **SUPPORT**

Support young people and teachers to develop their practice in education for environmental sustainability. Develop a community 'sustainability curriculum' for clubs, groups and for parents involved in education.



## **START EARLY**

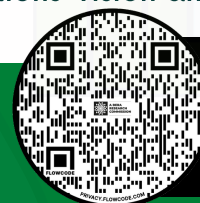
Identify and value sustainability education undertaken during the early years and in primary school and build on this work through community-based partnerships between early years, primary and secondary schools e.g. 'near-peer' teaching in both formal and informal settings.



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# NEXT STEPS

- Artist Maisy Summer will produce an illustrated manifesto drawing on ideas from workshops with teachers and young people.
- The manifesto will be launched on 1st November 2021 to coincide with COP26. Attendees invited to the launch will include relevant organisations and policy makers and we will encourage attendees to sign a pledge to
  - Acknowledge the importance of youth and teacher perspectives in education for environmental sustainability, and
  - During November 2021 – 2022, to commit to review the place and future of Education for Environmental Sustainability within their own organisations' vision and strategy.



For commission homepage scan QR code.

## ABOUT

BERA Research Commissions identify and address issues of current importance to the study and practice of education – specifically those likely to prove consequential to the future of the discipline and its research communities. Generating new empirical evidence and theoretically rigorous analysis, they make recommendations for how educational research, and BERA in particular, can respond to the challenges and opportunities arising from the changing nature of education across the four nations of the UK.

### COMMISSION CO-LEADS

#### Dr Lynda Dunlop

Senior Lecturer in Science Education  
University of York

#### Dr Elizabeth Rushton

Lecturer in Geography Education  
King's College London

### VISIT

- [www.york.ac.uk/education/research/uyseg/research-projects/manifesto-efes/](http://www.york.ac.uk/education/research/uyseg/research-projects/manifesto-efes/)
- [routesjournal.org/projects/bera/](http://routesjournal.org/projects/bera/)

To attend the launch of the manifesto 17:00-18:00 on 1st November 2021 contact [lynda.dunlop@york.ac.uk](mailto:lynda.dunlop@york.ac.uk).

### COMMISSION PRINCIPAL PARTNERS

- Jacquie Ayre, Liverpool World Centre
- Dr Andrea Bullivant, Liverpool World Centre, TEESNet
- Dr Jane Essex, Senior Lecturer in Chemistry Education, Strathclyde University,
- Faye Laverick and Alister Talbot, Huntington Research School
- Dr Cyrus Nayeri, Geography Teacher and Editor in Chief, Routes – the Journal for Student Geographers
- Michelle Ryan, Association for Science Education Northern Ireland Field Officer
- Smriti Safaya, University of York
- Amanda Smith, Education and Training Manager, Centre for Alternative Technology, Wales
- Judy Ling Wong, Honorary President, Black Environment Network



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