



FORum
for
YOUTH

DOWN to EaRth YoUth CoNfeRence

Friday 22nd February
The Wilderness Centre, Mitcheldean

Background

On Wednesday 21st February 2007, the Forest Youth Forum held their Healthvoice Youth Conference. As part of the evaluation process, young people attending the event were asked what topic they would choose for the 2008 conference. 33% chose "the environment".

The Youth Forum successfully applied to the Youth Opportunity Fund and Awards for All for funding to hold this year's event.

Youth Forum member Beth Ivey-Williams designed the conference poster, which was distributed via secondary schools, Forest of Dean Youth Workers' Network, Glos Youth Service and published in The Forester newspaper.

The Conference

At 10am on Friday 22nd February 45 young people arrived at The Wilderness Centre to register for the conference. The young people received environmentally friendly bags containing goodies from Severn Wye Energy Agency and Waste Education, along with information on recycling, saving energy and the Forest of Dean Play and Free Time Strategy.

Youth Forum member Holly Griffiths opened the day by welcoming young people to the venue and giving information about the workshops and activities available.

Graham Spearman (Forest Team Leader, Youth Service) advised health & safety information and rules of the venue, including the location of the various recycling bins available. Graham then led an ice-breaker game.



Youth Forum members Siobhan Vye and Jazmin Morgan facilitated discussion groups using two short clips from the Al Gore DVD "An Inconvenient Truth" and questions set using the Climate Change Film Pack produced by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. The ideas and comments from each discussion group are listed at the end of this report.



For the next 75 minutes, there was a choice of three workshops:

- ✂ Play & The Environment – Kate Wyatt, FoDDC & Neil Hutton, Forestry Commission
- ✂ Local climate change – Michael Dunwell, Forest of Dean Transition
- ✂ Renewable Energy – Ian Ferguson, Severn Wye Energy Agency

The lunchtime session ran between 12:30pm and 2pm. During this time, the young people took part in various activities, along with tucking into a finger buffet provided by Apex Catering. In keeping with our environment theme, Apex provided biodegradable plates and cups.

Outdoor and indoor activities on offer were:

- 🏠 Tunnelling and crate stacking – Wilderness Centre
- 🏠 Mobile team challenge – Glos Youth Service
- 🏠 Den building –Forestry Commission



A Marketplace was also available for the young people to browse and take away information from:

- 📄 Play Strategy stand – Kate Wyatt, FoDDC Community Regeneration Officer
- 📄 Forestry Commission – Neil Hutton
- 📄 Worn Out Remade fashion show – Youth Forum
- 📄 Don't Waste Wildlife – Glos Wildlife Trust
- 📄 Recycle for Gloucestershire – Waste Education
- 📄 Severn Wye Energy Agency – Eileen O'Haire
- 📄 Friends of the Earth – Martin Rudland
- 📄 Glos Federation of Young Farmers – Anne Hollingworth



After lunch, there was a second opportunity to attend one of the three workshops available.

Councillors Jane Horne and Marion Winship visited the conference during the day and joined with young people in their workshops.

Graham Spearman brought the day to a close by thanking all those involved in the day by attending, presenting workshops and stands, or providing lunchtime activities.

Before going home, the young people were asked to complete an evaluation form to give feedback on what had been enjoyable about the day and ideas for improvement for next year's event. A summary of the evaluation forms is at the end of this report.



Discussion Groups summary

Topic 1: What are the issues – where has this all come from? *Introducing the subject of climate change.*

1. What did you know about this before?
 - We knew that climate change was increasing each year and was becoming more of an issue
 - How the CO₂ was increasing in the earth's atmosphere
 - Ice is melting, more toxic waste, sun rays making atmosphere thicken, water level rising, polar bears dying
 - We knew a lot as we have been taught about it at school. Also one member of the group has seen the whole video before.
 - It warms the earth
 - We knew that the greenhouse gases kept the sun near the earth heating it up
 - Climate heating up, increase in CO₂, harming earth, caused by pollution
 - Global warming down to greenhouse gases
 - Seen the film before so we knew most of it, learn it at school
 - We knew that the sun rays are getting trapped in the ozone layer and causes the earth to warm up
 - A lot, the earth is heating up and ice caps are melting
2. Why do you think this matters?
 - Climate change melts the icecaps which means more flooding and extreme weather with changing ecosystems
 - It's changing the world for the worst, after a while it could be irreversible
 - Because species will die, water level will kill people, flood
 - It matters because the whole world is changing and if we don't do anything about it, there is going to be disastrous consequences, such as more natural disasters and extinctions.
 - If it gets too hot, we will die
 - The ice is melting, raising the height of the water, flooding us all
 - Affects future generation, ruin earth, affects habitat/environment
 - People will dehydrate, plants/animals/resources will die
 - Affects our future and that of our children – not isolated, affects everyone
 - Because the earth is getting hotter and it is melting ice and it is because of people polluting the world
 - Because could kill us all
3. Has this clip helped you understand what the issues are?
 - Yes it has because it has addressed different areas of global warming
 - Yes, the fundamental issue of CO₂ emissions
 - Yes in parts
 - Yes, it has helped us understand it better as it is described in an informative, simple but effective way
 - Yes
 - Yes because it showed global warming in detail
 - Knew before
 - It helped us see a picture of what is happening
 - Knew it already but doesn't harm to have it repeated
 - Yes, it helped us confirm what we was not sure about
 - Yes



4. How do you think this relates to your life?
- Global warming is a worldwide issue which will affect everyone
 - Affects whole world – heats everything
 - Affects animals and population
 - If we don't make the necessary changes then our future generations could suffer - also current population, such as the recent Hurricane Katrina which killed millions of people
 - Summer will be warmer, Florida will drown, ice-caps will melt
 - The next generation will be badly affected by global warming
 - Warning to reduce emissions, in future you should walk or ride your bike so it won't take up gas
 - Things might become restricted, people need to know if the earth is ok
 - Alters what will happen in the future – will we be able to live on earth? – we need to do something now to stop it
 - The temperature is rising and this causes burns and things and melt
 - I live on the earth
5. Do you have a part to play in the rise of CO₂ levels?
- If everyone participates in lowering CO₂ emissions we can make a big impact in stopping climate change
 - Yes – cars
 - Lifts to places, recycling more
 - Yes, everybody has, we are using the energy produced by fossil fuels, which seriously pollute the atmosphere. Also, cars burn fuels which add to CO₂ levels.
 - Yes
 - Yes, recycle, cutting down driving cars and electricity
 - Yes, everyone can contribute by reducing emissions e.g. walk/bike not car
 - Yes – driving
 - Everyone does – everything we do has an impact because we use up resources and emit gases but we can all change/help to protect the planet
 - Yes because we use cars to travel places
 - Yes, using cars, etc.

Topic 2: Realistic Solutions. *Explore the ways in which climate change can be related to our own lives and how changes can be made.*

6. What options does the film present us with to consider?
- Renewable energy, lower emission, cars, reduce consumption
 - Cut down on car fuel, bring in special cars
 - To cut down on using cars and vehicles that produce a lot of carbon dioxide
 - We've changed our future before, we can do it again
 - Drive higher mileage cards, walk/ride rather than drive, use energy efficient appliances, do something!
 - Energy efficient appliances, carbon capture, efficient cars – regulations, standards
 - Reduce emissions – hybrid cars, bikes – political opinion
 - Solar power
 - Change or die!
 - Reducing CO₂, recycling, attitudes towards recycling
7. What other options should we consider? Is "do nothing" an option?



- Doing nothing is not an option because CO₂ gases will keep affecting climate change
 - Run cars on LPG – look for alternative energy sources
 - Cut down on using cars and vehicles – doing nothing is not an option
 - It is, but it won't do anything positive
 - Do something yourself, if you see a light on, turn it off – ask people to buy more energy efficient appliances
 - Renewable energy, recycling, bio-fuels
 - Walk, bike, renewable energy – fuel for cars, electricity
 - No
 - Doing nothing is an option but whether it's the right one is something to discuss
 - Walk more, use public services more, increase public transport, stop smoking, less cars on the road, turn TV off instead of on standby
8. Why do some people think that climate change is not a priority?
- Because companies which are increasing climate change will lose money
 - They're selfish, don't believe it
 - Because they are dumb and because you can't see the effects until it's too late
 - It isn't obvious – the extent of problem isn't highlighted
 - Because some people think it will go away – just a phase. Because they are selfish and they will be gone by the time global warming really gets into action
 - The effects it may have on the economy – higher priority issues i.e. poverty!
 - It won't happen immediately – takes a long time – change of lifestyle
 - You can't see the effects til it's too late
 - They love their cars and the world is in poverty
 - Because it is not affecting them at present – they can't see the physical changes
9. Can the actions of the individual make a difference?
- Individuals can influence people to make changes to their lifestyle
 - Yes
 - Yes
 - Yes – altogether makes a huge difference if everyone does a small bit
 - Yes
 - Yes, but only if everyone works together – people need to change their attitudes – little things can make a difference
 - Not much – but if everyone did something it would i.e. recycle, energy saving appliances
 - Yes
 - Yes, Al Gore is making a difference
 - Yes
10. Should we influence policy makers to try and change what is happening? How?
- Yes because these are the people who have the most power to make changes. Petitions and appeals could change their views
 - Vote at elections
 - Yes by predicting what can happen
 - Lobby MPs – Greenpeace, I Count, Friends of Earth – make known what is happening – get community involved
 - Yes
 - If we put pressure on the government then changes should be made – surely they need to carry out the wishes of the community?!
 - Yes – they can influence private sector – conferences, schooling, protests



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- Yes – using non-electric things
- Yes
- Yes – more pressure on recycling, compulsory – actions need to be enforced

Evaluation forms summary

What did you think about the conference?

Excellent - 56% Good – 29% Ok – 15% Not good – 0%

What did you think about the discussion groups?

Excellent - 18% Good – 51% Ok – 26% Not good – 5%

What did you think about the “Play and the Environment” workshop?

Excellent - 52% Good – 39% Ok – 9% Not good – 0%

What did you think about the “Local climate change” workshop?

Excellent - 12% Good – 41% Ok – 41% Not good – 6%

What did you think about the “Renewable Energy” workshop?

Excellent - 39% Good – 49% Ok – 9% Not good – 3%

Was The Wilderness Centre a good venue for the conference?

Excellent - 50% Good – 31% Ok – 19% Not good – 0%

What did you think about the lunchtime activities?

Excellent - 77% Good – 21% Ok – 2% Not good – 0%

What did you think about the Marketplace?

Excellent - 19% Good – 47% Ok – 31% Not good – 3%

How would you improve the conference?

- Better food. More exciting activities
- It was brilliant
- I wouldn't
- Bigger range of lunchtime activities
- More things outside
- More activities like archery
- Not as boring
- Longer time for break activities
- More activities
- Couldn't
- Funnier workshops, more lunchtime activities
- More veggie variety
- More practical things
- Different order of programme e.g. film and questions later on, different ice breaker activity first
- Different workshops for different age groups or more for less time



- Split age group. Some of the younger children didn't understand so just went mad
- Some stuff already knew as I'm older than some
- Have groups split by age e.g. 10 – 12, 14+. Younger children had short attention spans so disrupted sessions for older people keen to learn
- Have activities for older people. The workshops could have had a bit more content for older people (detail).
- More outdoor activities
- Have more activities to do and shorter lessons
- More activities that are fun but still informative
- More time for the tunnels
- More time to do stuff
- People get to do all 3 activities rather than 2/3
- More fun things, less boring long talks
- More choice in food

If the Youth Forum held another youth conference, which topic would you choose?

Things to do Places to go	Personal Safety	Tackling Discrimination	Drugs and alcohol
52%	3%	9%	36%

Comments from the day

- I liked the day but thought people could have been more involved
- The crate stacking was excellent
- Forest should use more renewable energy
- Excellent
- I would like to do archery and I had a good day
- Enjoyed myself
- Very good!!!! 😊
- Not really
- It was ok over all but I would have had more lunch activities
- Brilliant conference, like to do it again
- Thoroughly enjoyed the day, lots to do and reinforce the problems with current way of life. Enjoyed the challenges as well. Thanks
- Well organised. Good activities and workshops
- Thank you. A thoroughly enjoyable day.
- Really appreciated a well organised and executed day. Provided some good awareness/knowledge. Keep up the good work.
- I would come again
- Very fun lunchtime activity 'den building'
- It was excellent
- It was very fun
- I had a great day thank you. I would come again. Den building was excellent.
- Not many people done what they were told. They need to be stricter.
- Really good fun
- I think we should combat climate change, not just for ourselves, but for future generations
- The only thing that I really enjoyed was the den building
- Good fun – want to do it again
- This day was perfect for me