

'Looking Forward'

Evidence and Innovation: Defra's needs from the sciences over the next 10 years.

Consultation with Young People, November 2004

Four members of the U What? Young People's Panel at the Children's Rights Alliance for England produced a six page consultation document for Defra to inform young people of their work and gain feedback on their proposals for the next 10 years.

The document was written in everyday language and included descriptions of the main areas of Defra's work. The final page of the document was a tear off questionnaire with 4 questions:

- 1) What do you think Defra should work on over the next 10 years to create the future you want? Think about
Environment
Food
Countryside
- 2) What research/scientific work should we carry out to achieve this?
- 3) Our main goal is sustainable development and from 2005 we think we should focus our attention on climate change and energy.

Have we got the priorities right? Please tell us why you agree or disagree.

What else should we focus on?

- 4) These are the six area that we want scientific information on. Could you rank them 1-6 to let us know which issues you think are the most important (1 = highest, 6 = lowest)?

Climate change and energy
Sustainable consumption and production
Natural resource protection
Sustainable rural communities
Sustainable food and farming
Preparing for emergencies

Summary of Results

- One hundred and seventy young people responded.
- Young people tended to be most interested in Defra's work on the environment rather than food and countryside.
- In relation to the '**Environment**' young people thought Defra should work on: reducing pollution (litter, air pollution); reducing the use of fossil fuels and subsequent global warming; protecting the environment (stopping destruction, protecting trees and countryside); and recycling.
- In relation to '**Food**' young people most commonly suggested Defra work on producing healthier foods and distribution of food to make sure everyone has the food they need.
- Most young people advised Defra to stop further development of the '**Countryside**', however a smaller number of young people felt more buildings, services and people could be placed in the countryside.
- Young people's suggestions for the research and scientific work that Defra should carry out focused on: reducing pollution (air pollution, litter and a cleaner environment); use of fossil fuels and global warming (ways of reducing the fossil fuels we use, developing alternative sources of energy and exploring the impact we are having on global warming); food production (making food more affordable, plentiful and using genetic technology to improve food).
- Almost all of the young people agreed with the priorities Defra proposed. Their reasons stemmed from concern about the impact of global warming and climate change on the environment, themselves and future generations.
- Those young people that disagreed were concerned about whether focusing on global warming and climate change would make a difference. Some thought it was inevitable and that Defra should put more commitment into reducing pollution now and introducing alternative energy sources, or working out how to make the resources we have sustainable.
- Food production, recycling, preparing for emergencies and pollution were the most commonly suggested alternative priority areas.
- Most young people ranked climate change and energy as the most important area of Defra's work. This was followed by preparing for emergencies and protecting natural resources. The issue that was least important to most young people was sustainable rural communities.

Analysis

One hundred and seventy young people responded. All responses were entered into Filemaker Pro a programme that enables analysis of qualitative information and the calculation of simple statistics. Print outs of all responses for each question are attached to the back of this report. Responses were collated and key themes identified. The key findings are presented in the following format:

- Number of responses
- Key themes (ranked if appropriate)
- Quotes from young people
- Significant comments from individuals (if necessary)

Key Findings

Question 1: What do you think Defra should work on over the next 10 years to create the future you want?

This question was followed with cues to focus young people's thinking on Defra's main areas of responsibility – Environment, Food and Countryside.

Qu. 1 Environment

There were 142 (84%) responses to the environment cue. Fifty six simply circled the word 'Environment' to demonstrate their view that it is important for Defra to work on issues related to the environment. Nine of these young people also selected either Food or Countryside. Of the 142 responses 86 young people provided more detailed answers.

Twenty nine young people believed Defra should work on reducing pollution. Quite often young people did not describe what sort of pollution they were concerned about. Those that did ranged from keeping streets free from litter to concern about air quality.

Work with rubbish and put in the bin more.

Clean the streets.

Get rid of some of the factories so that we have clean fresh air.

Make less polluted things.

... air quality and people's health.

Defra should tell people to clean more. More bins, stop animal testing, stop factories polluting the air.

An additional four young people were supportive of Defra's work and the focus on the environment as they believed "*with Defra our environment will stay clean*".

Twenty young people believed Defra should work on reducing the use of fossil fuels to slow down global warming. Responses included suggestions for alternative sources of energy and concern about the use of non-renewable energy sources.

I think Defra should concentrate on silver energy to save burning fossil fuels

Defra should think about using less un-renewable resources and try to use our technology.

I think Defra should focus on using solar energy instead of burning fossil fuels for energy because burning fuels pollutes the air and damages the environment. This would slow down the greenhouse effect.

They should try to find an alternative energy resource because the non-renewable energy resources are running out.

An additional seven young people suggested that Defra should work on increasing people's use of trains, cycles and walking.

Eight young people focused on Defra's role in protecting the environment. Some did not refer specifically to what Defra should be protecting but others were focused on forests and the countryside.

I think they should think about the environment. It needs more protection.

All countries should contribute to the upkeep of the rain forests.

I think that we should be working on everything that is being destroyed.

I think they should use things that don't harm the environment.

More countryside should be preserved to fight global warming.

A further eight young people believed Defra should encourage people to recycle more to improve the environment.

Encourage more recycling

I think to help the environment, clean every Friday as well as picking up the rubbish they should also pick up recycling.

Recycling more waste, less pollution.

Recycle and act sensibly towards the environment.

Other issues that young people felt Defra should work on in relation to the environment included:

- Improving access by making better paths and parks
- Making it safer and worry free (no detail provided but presume in relation to pollutants, effects of global warming, etc)
- Reducing population
- Informing people of global warming and what to expect
- Protecting people from the effects of an ice age in the future
- Inventions to stop natural disasters
- Campaigns to inform people of the importance of looking after the environment

Some young people noted that if Defra focused on the environment this would in turn help food production and improve the countryside.

Question. 1 - Food

There were 70 (41%) responds to the food cue. Eighteen young people simply circled the word 'Food' to demonstrate their view that it is important for Defra to work on issues related to food. Eleven of these young people also selected either Environment or Countryside.

Of the 70 responses 59 young people provided more detailed answers. The most common responses suggested Defra should work on producing healthier foods and distribution of food to make sure everyone has the food they need.

Twenty young people believed Defra should work on producing healthier food. Some thought Defra should use technology to scientifically improve food, others indicated encouraging people to change their diets, reducing 'junk food'.

More vegetables and less junk food.

The food we have is not good because junk food is cheap and healthy food is expensive, so people do not buy it. Lots of adults and children are obese.

New experiments to use techniques to make scientifically healthier food.

Fourteen young people advised Defra to focus on producing more food and redistributing it so everyone has access to good food. Often this was in relation to providing food for third world nations, or to give to the people in need, but also to increase the types of food available.

Waste less food and give to the needy.

Make more food (different types)

To help people starving and dieing from starvation.

Third word countries and to ration food so we do not run out.

Find a way to provide food for everyone.

Other suggestions for issues Defra should work on included:

- Having supplies in case of flooding
- Encouraging people to grow food themselves rather than relying on shops
- Some suggested allowing more genetically modified foods, while others thought Defra should stop the sale of genetically modified foods
- Exploring other ways to make food
- Improving transportation of food
- More balanced diet in school canteens

Qu. 1 Countryside

A total of 58 (34%) of young people responded to the countryside cue. Eight simply circled the word 'Countryside' to demonstrate their view that it is important for Defra to work on issues related to the countryside. Seven of these young people also selected either Environment or Food. Of the 58 responses 50 young people provided more detailed answers.

Seventeen young people advised Defra to stop further development of the countryside. Their main focus was on stopping the countryside becoming more built up with homes and factories.

Stop building over the countryside.

Keep the countryside for vegetables and grains.

They should keep the countryside to let animals have homes.

Stop factories, plants etc setting up in the countryside.

Stop building on the countryside and start re-using land wasted with derelict buildings.

Look after farms

In contrast to this 9 young people suggested that the countryside should be further developed. Their suggestions ranged from more people living in the countryside, to building more shops and services for rural people.

The countryside people should have their own facilities and space schools/shops/business.

Less countryside

More people should live in the countryside.

To leave the country as it is without destroying it or harming animals, but put more shops etc. there so you don't have to travel so much.

Other suggested areas of work included:

- Building wind turbines
- Not cutting down trees, planting more
- Stopping people traveling from the countryside to cities
- Building walls around the countryside
- Keeping the countryside clean
- Warning farmers of diseases and making safer pesticides for fields.

Question Two: What research/scientific work should we carry out to achieve this?

A total of 143 (84%) young people responded to Question 2. While many gave suggestions for specific research some young people indicated an issue of concern or a practical suggestion. These have been included where possible as young people are likely to have intended that Defra research how a particular issue could be dealt with or how their practical suggestion could be put in place.

The most common response (33 young people) referred to Defra undertaking research to reduce pollution. This mostly related to reducing air pollution but also litter and having a clean environment.

Work on the environment to make it cleaner and safer.

Find out how many fossil fuels we are burning that are damaging the environment and polluting the air.

You can make things that cause less pollution.

Making cars to stop pollution. Electric

Use ways which cause less poisonous fumes.

To keep the environment safe we need to take care of it. We cannot get the environment polluted. Scientists can improve the environment and maybe create technology.

This was closely followed by views that Defra should carry out research related to the use of fossil fuels and global warming (30 young people). Suggestions included research into ways of reducing the fossil fuels we use, developing alternative sources of energy and exploring the impact we are having on global warming.

What impact do alternative energies have on the environment?

I think scientists should think of ways to make coal, oil and should think of ways to make heat.

The natural resources are running out, we need to think of other things that do not use too much oil, coal and other things.

How can we stop using so many fossil fuels that pollute the environment causing global warming?

Keep checking the overall temperature of the planet.

Twenty four young people suggested Defra undertake research into food production. This included making food more affordable, plentiful and using genetic technology to improve food.

See what other food we could grow and do more testing.

Think about alternative ways to make things. Genetic food.

You should make food that tastes nice and is healthy.

To help food get cheaper so poor people can get to buy it.

How you can make junk food taste the same but make it with less sugar and fat and see if more people will buy healthier food if it is cheaper.

Other ideas included:

- Experiments to make machines more environmentally-friendly
- Ways to inform people and encourage them to recycle and take care of the environment
- Ways to control deforestation and research into the impact of deforestation as well as ways to grow trees faster
- Keeping track of weather changes, climate change research
- Investigate different diseases

Young people also had suggestions about how Defra could carry out this research including:

- *They should gather ideas from the entire world to find a suitable solution to the problems of today.*
- *More questionnaires, raise money, awareness, presentations*
- *Listen to the public can make a better future*
- *Internet, books, newspaper*
- *You should go and look at different environments and see how the environment looks*
- *You must find out which one (area/issue) is most important and then work on it.*

Question 3a: Have we got the priorities right? Please tell us why you agree or disagree

A total of 137 (81%) young people responded to question 3a. Of these 119 (87%) agreed with the priorities Defra has proposed.

Reasons why young people agreed included:

- *You stop pollution in the air*
- *It will affect our children*
- *It will affect me and my family*
- *It will affect everybody*
- *If they do not focus on climate change and energy we are all going to die because of the weather.*
- *Something big could happen and then we would know about it.*
- *The climate is just getting worse and soon it will be un-repairable.*
- *We are using too much energy and we as a country are not thinking about the future.*
- *People need Defra to help.*
- *Otherwise my generation will have to pay for something we did not do*
- *Weather and energy run the world.*

The young people that did not agree with stated priorities (13%) expressed concerns about whether work on these priorities would make a difference and felt that more commitment should be put into introducing alternative energy sources and reducing pollution.

- *Humans can't change the climate but we may try to.*
- *I think you should work on the environment but also some on food.*
- *You can't do anything about climate change so there is no point*
- *Instead of preventing things like global warming we are helping it.*
- *I disagree because there is too much pollution which causes global warming.*

- *No because we should find other ways to make energy and get water or food.*
- *Disagree, you should concentrate on making sure that we have enough gas, coal, food and supplies for years to come.*
- *I do not think food is as important though as it is up to a person what they eat.*
- *I agree but this is not the only problem the earth's environment faces so some attention should be put on things like deforestation.*
- *I think you should concentrate more on the environment we live in today and the food we eat.*
- *I disagree because I think you should be focusing mainly on global warming.*

Question 3b: What else should we focus on?

A total of 121 (71%) young people provided alternative priorities for Defra to consider. The most commonly suggested alternatives were:

- Food, sustainable farming and food. Healthy food is seen as essential to life. Young people thought Defra should focus on getting better food to people here and overseas and that food production should be sustainable [17 responses].
- Recycling. Encouraging people to recycle, reducing landfill. [10 responses]
- Preparing for emergencies, particularly flooding. [10 responses]
- Pollution, mostly related to cars and factories [20 responses]

Other issues raised included:

- Deforestation
- Use of fossil fuels, greenhouse gases and the ozone layer
- Weather
- Protecting natural resources
- Focus on animals and other living things, endangered species
- What we are going to do when oil runs out.
- Preparation for climate change
- The number of people in this country
- Protecting the countryside

Question 4: These are the six areas that we want scientific information on. Could you rank them 1 – 6 to let us know which issues you think are the most important.

A total of 150 (88%) young people answered this question.

Most young people ranked climate change and energy with a 1 or 2 indicating their view that this is the most important area of Defra’s work. This was followed by preparing for emergencies and protecting natural resources. The issue that was least important to most young people was sustainable rural communities.

Climate Change and Energy

| Rank | Number of Responses | Percentage of respondents |
|------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | 76 | 51 |
| 2 | 32 | 21 |
| 3 | 13 | 9 |
| 4 | 6 | 4 |
| 5 | 9 | 6 |
| 6 | 14 | 9 |

Sustainable Rural Communities

| Rank | Number of Responses | Percentage of respondents |
|------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | 5 | 3 |
| 2 | 8 | 5 |
| 3 | 19 | 13 |
| 4 | 17 | 11 |
| 5 | 39 | 26 |
| 6 | 61 | 41 |

Sustainable Consumption and Production

| Rank | Number of Responses | Percentage of respondents |
|------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | 14 | 9 |
| 2 | 12 | 8 |
| 3 | 28 | 19 |
| 4 | 38 | 25 |
| 5 | 28 | 19 |
| 6 | 29 | 19 |

Sustainable food and farming

| Rank | Number of Responses | Percentage of respondents |
|------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | 10 | 7 |
| 2 | 27 | 18 |
| 3 | 31 | 21 |
| 4 | 23 | 15 |
| 5 | 38 | 25 |
| 6 | 20 | 13 |

Natural Resource Protection

| Rank | Number of Responses | Percentage of respondents |
|------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | 30 | 20 |
| 2 | 41 | 27 |
| 3 | 28 | 19 |
| 4 | 25 | 17 |
| 5 | 13 | 9 |
| 6 | 12 | 8 |

Preparing for emergencies

| Rank | Number of Responses | Percentage of respondents |
|------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | 39 | 26 |
| 2 | 32 | 21 |
| 3 | 24 | 16 |
| 4 | 29 | 19 |
| 5 | 12 | 8 |
| 6 | 12 | 8 |