

ESEF Cymru
the seventh meeting of the

Earth Science Education Forum – Cymru (ESEF-Cymru)
held in conjunction with
Environment Agency Wales and the
Cardiff Harbour Authority

“CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE VISIT and
SEVERN BARRAGE DISCUSSION”

Is Cardiff bay an example of sustainable development? What are your views on the Severn Barrage proposal?

4.30pm - 7.00pm, 26 June 2007

Minutes of the seventh meeting

1. Apologies for absence:

Apologies were received from a number of individuals, organisations and members of the Welsh Assembly, including Rt Hon Rhodri Morgan AM.

2. Chairman’s introduction:

Chairman welcomed the attendees, gave a summary of the ESEF Cymru and outlined the background to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Earth Sciences (Earth Sciences Group), which is administered by ESEF. The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Earth Sciences meets each month in Westminster when the House is sitting and covers a wide range of Earth Science topics. A list of all meetings held can be seen on the www.esef.org.uk website.

The Chairman invited attendees to suggest topics for future meetings.

3. Minutes of the sixth ESEF Cymru meeting, 13 March 2007 were confirmed as a true record.

4. Matters arising:

[Numbers in square brackets are paragraph numbers from the minutes of the previous meeting]

[4] Welsh Language

- Dr John Davies, Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) gave a brief progress report. A draft report had been prepared and sent to the Executive Secretary who had given initial feedback and forwarded the report to the Chairman. Funding is being sought to publish the report by ESEF Cymru in conjunction with the National Museum of Wales.

Action: Dr John Davies and Cally Oldershaw

[4] Outdoor Learning questionnaire

- Cally Oldershaw and Kim Polistina (University of Glamorgan) arranged to meet to discuss evaluation and further development of the questionnaire. Funding sources were discussed.

Action: Cally Oldershaw and Kim Polistina

5. Stakeholders' discussion:

Collaborative projects and feedback from ESEF Cymru stakeholders, including key issues and concerns.

- Jana Horak and Heather Jackson (National Museum of Wales) reported that Museum is looking to develop their collection of specimens for loan. Cally suggested looking at alternative sources of funding such as PPARC which had funded the Natural History Museum's meteorite loan boxes for schools project.
- The importance of field work was discussed, with positive examples from attendees where fieldwork had acted to motivate pupils and a wider audience.
- The costs of undergraduate courses in Earth science were compared with other science courses which included fieldwork or laboratory experience. Science courses are generally more expensive than courses in the humanities etc. Fieldwork restricted students from working during vacations possibly affecting the eventual amount of debt that a student acquires. Salaries for Earth science graduates were not perceived as being in line with other sciences, nor anywhere near those of professions such as medicine, law or working in the city. The message that there are good starting salaries and that career progression is possible in Earth science – was not getting through to school students.
- Careers advice in schools was still inadequate and in some cases totally missing. Few teachers have any idea of the earnings potential or options available in Earth science professions.
- Admission Tutors for Earth science courses generally require biology, physics and chemistry (and maths) as entry requirements for undergraduate Earth science courses, not geology, geography or environmental science. Students wishing to study Earth science GCSEs or A levels and keen to follow a geological degree may be advised to give up a subject they enjoy. If they don't want to take all three traditional sciences they may give up on geology and choose a different career. Earth science is unique in giving this mixed message to students choosing GCSE and A level subjects, which also has a detrimental effect on the efforts of teachers trying to increase the teaching of Earth sciences in schools.

6. Future programme:

Tuesday 9 October 2007, Cardiff

Venue and speakers' details to be confirmed

- Programme for the next meeting:

4.30 pm – informal networking (tea/coffee)

5.00 pm – 7.00 pm business meeting followed by presentations and discussion

7.00 pm – end

The Chair invited attendees to suggest possible speakers and topics for future meetings. Suggestions should be sent via email to Cally Oldershaw

Action: All

7. Resources

The Chairman thanked those who had given support to ESEF Cymru and invited attendees to suggest ideas as to how they might be able to contribute.

8. AOB

None

9. Date of next meeting – Tuesday 9 October, Cardiff. Venue and speakers' details to be confirmed.

Cally Oldershaw
30 June 2006