

NATIONAL AND LOCAL NGOS

D C Cawsey

Environmental Training Consultancy, Pencroft Farm, Uplyme, Devon, England

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Summary

National and local non-governmental environmental organizations (NGOs) are very diverse in both their aims and in their activities. National NGOs are usually concerned with global, national and local issues. Local NGOs are usually only interested in a specific local issue or a relatively small geographically defined area.

Important strengths of both national and local environmental NGOs are that these organizations usually have members who are "close to the problem or issue", and that they are usually able to take a long-term view.

Activities undertaken by these NGOs include: campaigning, publicity, education, representation, protest, and action, and all these activities can be considered as part of the education process. Environmental systems are very complex and by using a range of educational methods NGOs are often able to convey complex environmental issues to the public.

In this article the diversity of these NGOs is illustrated by the following examples: a program of Higher Education for Sustainable Development organized by the Forum for the Future; support for primary and secondary school pupils and teachers organized by WWF-UK; the Centre for Alternative Technology's practical demonstration project on sustainable living; and the RSPB's Cirl Bunting Project aimed at increasing biodiversity

primarily through the environmental education of farmers and land owners. Although these examples are all from the UK, similar examples can be found in many countries.

1. Introduction

National and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are very diverse in both their aims and in their activities. National NGOs can be concerned with global, national and local issues. Local NGOs are usually only interested in a specific local issue or a relatively small geographically defined area.

An important strength of both national and local environmental NGOs is that these organizations usually have members who are “close to the problem or issue”. A second important strength is that these organizations are usually able to take a long-term view where necessary. This contrasts with the relatively short-term view often taken by elected democratic governments.

The activities undertaken by these NGOs include: campaigning, publicity, education, representation, protest, and action. These activities can all be considered as part of the education process. Environmental systems are very complex and an element of strength of these NGOs is that by using a range of educational methods they are often able to convey complex environmental issues.

In this article the diversity of these NGOs is illustrated by the following:

- A Higher Education Program for Sustainable Development organized by the Forum for the Future;
- Support for primary and secondary school pupils and teachers organized by WWF-UK;
- The Centre for Alternative Technology’s practical demonstration project on sustainable living;
- The RSPB’s Cirl Bunting Project aimed at increasing biodiversity primarily through the environmental education of farmers and land owners.

Although these examples are all from the UK, similar examples can be found in many countries.

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Bibliography

www.forumforthefuture.org.uk [The web site provides information about the organization’s educational

activities including the Sustainable Development Higher Education Programme.]

www.rspb.org.uk [The web site contains comprehensive information about the activities of The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Through it details of the Cirl Bunting Project can be obtained. The RSPB also regularly publishes a Cirl Bunting Bulletin.]

www.cat.org.uk [The web site provides information about the Centre for Alternative Technology.]

www.wwf.org.uk [The web site provides information about WWF activities in the UK. There is a dedicated education site at www.wwflearning.co.uk which contains information about the support for schools and the 'Our World' Project.]

Biographical Sketch

Professor David Cawsey has an honours degree in Geology and a doctorate in Civil Engineering. He is a Chartered Geologist and a Fellow of the Geological Society of London. His wide experience includes working for central and local governments, higher education, and industry in engineering geology and subsequently in environmental engineering and management. He is the author of more than 50 publications in these fields. Other professional activities have included leading successful international environmental and training programmes, and acting as external examiner and adviser for degree programmes and doctorates. He now combines some university teaching with consultancy and professional activities.