

Optimisation of Environmental Education in Ireland



National Parks & Wildlife Service & Nature Education

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Outline



- Defining Environmental Education
- Obligations to Educate
- Environmental Education in the Primary Curriculum
- National Parks & Wildlife Service and Education
- Proposals for strategy
- Advantages
- Results to date
- Further research plans

Defining Environmental Education



- Set out since the early 1970's
- “ to develop a world population that is aware of and concerned about the environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations and commitment to work individually and collectively toward solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones ”
UNESCO-UNEP 1976

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Obligations on NPWS to educate



- **National Biodiversity Plan** “there is a need to develop a targeted education and awareness strategy.”
- **National Heritage Plan** “ensure the protection of our heritage and to promote its enjoyment by all.”
- **Agenda 21** “achieve environmental and development education from primary school-age through adulthood”
- **Convention Biological Diversity** “Urges parties to promote education on biodiversity through relevant institutions”
- **Management objectives of NPWS** “To provide for public access & encourage public appreciation and enjoyment of the parks”
- **World Conservation Union** “for inspirational, educational, cultural and recreational purposes”

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Nature education in the primary curriculum



- 1971 – Social & Environmental Studies introduced into the primary school curriculum
- 2003 – Official launch of the new Social, Environmental and Scientific Education, SESE, Curriculum
- Nature studies is incorporated here
- Environmental Education should be approached as a cross curricular topic

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Education in NPWS



- Currently 4 of our 6 NP's have an Education programme
- Conservation Rangers - education remit
- **Connemara National Park**
 - Education Officer appointed in 2004
 - Outreach to primary schools, followed with Park visit
 - Nature walks and activities
 - Seen as a positive link with the community
- **Glenveagh National Park**
 - Education programme since 2002
 - Aimed at primary schools
 - Site visits and Outreach offered
 - Guided walks and nature trails

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Education in NPWS



■ Killarney National Park

- Programme run by Kerry VEC on NPWS site
- Primary & Secondary school groups catered for
- Site visits and Outreach offered
- Teacher training courses
- Discovery weekends throughout the year

■ Wicklow Mountains National Parks

- Primary & Secondary school groups catered for
- Youth groups & Summer projects
- Site Visits and Outreach offered
- Teacher training courses
- Summer lectures series

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Education in NPWS



■ Wexford Wildfowl Reserve

- Teacher training
- Adult education courses
- Small number of school groups catered for

■ NEEC - Knocksink

- Programme run by DIT on NPWS site
- Primary & Secondary school groups catered for
- Practical conservation workshops
- Adult learning courses
- Student placements
- Teacher training

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Why NPWS need an Education Strategy?

- Co-ordinated approach
- Standardisation – greater quality assurance
- Share staff expertise & training
- Develop links with other government agencies, NGO'S etc.
- Clearly define aims and objectives
- Create a positive profile for NPWS
- Facilitates the development of national and international projects

Inclusion in the Strategy

- Education centres throughout the country
- Outreach network to access all areas and promote focus on the local community environment
- Expansion of existing programmes & development of new ones
- Curriculum consultation
- Monitoring & Assessment
- Development of Educational Resources
- Development of links with Department of Education
- Co-ordinate with teacher training colleges

Advantages

- **For National Parks & Wildlife Service**
 - Active support to carry out their work
 - Aids & promotes national conservation efforts
 - Creates a positive profile for NPWS

- **For Environmental Education**
 - Provision of educational resources for schools
 - Promotes the use of nature designations as educational tools
 - Assist teachers in covering curriculum content
 - Provision of skilled personnel for fieldtrip opportunities

- **To build an informed and concerned society**

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Results to date

- Support & Recognition by the National Parks & Wildlife Service

- From looking at visitor and education visitor numbers there is an obvious demand for an education service

- Formation of an Education Review Committee

- Development of links between sites

- Currently preparing a presentation for senior management

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Further Research Plans

- Development of links between Government agencies & all groups involved in environmental education in Ireland
- Establishment of links between NPWS and third level institutes
- Development of similar programme for second level education

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