

DCMS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY: SECTORS

MUSEUMS, LIBRARIES & ARCHIVES

Museums are metaphors for the kind of society we have, and the society we wish to create. (*David Anderson, A Common Wealth: Museums and Learning in the UK 1997*)
We believe that there is scope for public libraries to develop mutually beneficial partnerships with those businesses that recognise the importance of corporate social responsibility. Libraries provide an excellent means for such companies to implement CSR programmes aimed at supporting local communities, lifelong learning and combating social exclusion. (*Framework for the Future: Libraries, Learning and Information in the Next Decade. DCMS, 2003*)

CURRENT POSITION

Museums, archives and libraries have a pivotal role to play in showing the connections between the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development, and making information about the relevant issues more widely available and accessible, regionally as well as nationally, as the examples below illustrate:

- **Natural History Museum's *The Earth from the air*** photographic exhibition on the museum's front lawn represents a report on the state of the planet. It features explicit sustainable development messages such as differential access to the basic resources of education, health care and clean water, as well as providing an exciting and motivating view of the planet. Inside the museum, the recently opened Darwin Centre offers live presentations each day, given by curators and scientists, which are frequently connected with themes of sustainable development. Over the past few months these have included Chinese mitten crabs in the Thames; biodiversity and cultural diversity; fish and climate change and biodiversity, conservation and taxonomy.
- **Sheffield Industrial Museums Trust** operates three important museums dedicated to the Industrial and Social History of Sheffield; Kelham Island Museum, Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet and Shepherd Wheel. New displays have been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund at Kelham Island Museum, which is set on an island in the River Don and includes an Environmental Education Centre.

The following are *Opening the Doors* projects:

- **Kilmartin House Trust, Argyll** is regarded as Scotland's first eco-museum. As a result of its desire to develop ways in which the rurally located museum could fruitfully be used by, and made more accessible to, the community, Kilmartin House ran a project, working with 13 young men on the New Deal scheme to train in working with ancient pottery. The trainees made and fired pots, and created a joint piece of work, which was exhibited at the Museum. There has generated much interest in similar training from careers services further afield in Argyll, and Kilmartin House will continue to experiment with ways in which it can become more relevant to its local community.

Public libraries were founded on principles of mutuality and shared resources, and these continue to be even more relevant today with the development of the People's Network. Public libraries work in an intrinsically sustainable way in that they are based on principles of re-use, through the constant re-use of books and other materials." Resource 2003

- **Curiosity & Imagination: 'Bringing heritage to life' testbed projects: 'The Hour Glass Project' - Broughty Ferry Environmental Project, Dundee**
The aim of this project is to help 8-14 year olds to engage with the natural and built environment of the Tay estuary through exploring past daily life activities which were closely connected with the estuary, such as rope making and knot tying, food preparation and storage, beach games. The youngsters learn these hands-on skills from older members of the community and pass them on to their peers.
- **ICT in Public Libraries -The People's Network**
The People's Network programme was a UK wide initiative, which ensured that all public libraries offered public Internet access by the end of 2002. £100 million of lottery funding from the New Opportunities Fund Community Access to Lifelong Learning programme has been invested in ICT technical infrastructure and equipment to create a network of ICT learning centres in more than 4,000 public libraries nationwide. A further £20 million is being provided for training 40,000 library staff in ICT skills and learner support, and another £50 million for the digitisation of educational and learning materials for the network. Resource (the Council for Museums, Libraries and Archives) worked with New Opportunities Fund to deliver the programme.
- "The striking design of the (award-winning) **Peckham Library** has provided a new landmark in an area much in need of regeneration. The figures for the first full year of the new library compared to the two closed libraries it replaced show that annual visits were up from 168,000 to 536,000 and loans from 93,000 to 385,000."
(from the recent Resource/CABE report on library buildings)

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT VISION

DCMS needs to encourage museums, archives and libraries to develop fully their great potential for raising public awareness and motivation for sustainable development. Many within the sector are already far advanced in embedding a sustainable development approach but DCMS should offer appropriate support to those who could do more. Collectively, museums, archives and libraries can:

- Share best practice;
- Promote better understanding of the principles of sustainable development through exhibitions, online collections, educational resources, programmes and events, outreach work and community links;
- Support early years and informal learning, as well as school groups to interpret the principles of sustainable development;
- Work closely with academics and scientists to make their resources available for research;

- Develop their own corporate approaches to sustainable development issues within each of their organizations;
- Consider the principles of sustainability, such as whole life costing, when making funding decisions