

A review of education for sustainability at the Green Gathering 2026

A report by

Sticky Exhibits Community Interest Company



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Thinking outside the box

There's a tick in the box, but this is more than box ticking.
Lying awake the site is still
The last reveller is quiet and the day is done
Even the birds are silent. No snores.
A pause after a day of encounters, of music, words, connection, and debate
There's learning here, wisdom, a way to mend to broken.
There's a tick in the box, but it's a wonderful box, and a very big tick.
This is more than box ticking.

Poem written by Bryan, one of the report authors, during the Creative Sparks Poetry Workshop at Green Gathering 2026

Introduction

This report presents a review of the Green Gathering 2026 focused on the event's education for sustainability aspect.

The review is presented in six parts. First, the background introduces the 'gathering' and its organisers. This part describes the 'brief' and the review's intended purpose. Second, the authors of the report and their organisation are introduced. This part highlights the reviewers' interest in education for sustainability. Third, the concepts behind education for sustainability are laid out as a foundation for wider reflection. This section covers education, learning, sustainability and sustainable development and their combination together as education for sustainability. Fourth, the method for the review using an immersive approach is described. The fifth section documents the green gathering experience and reflections on it. The sixth and final part presents some conclusions and ideas for further consideration.

Background

The Green Gathering is an outdoor off-grid festival that takes place over three days on a parkland site (Piercefield Park) on the edge of Chepstow, south Wales. The event is organised by the Green Gathering Charity and delivered by Optimistic Trout Productions CIC a related not-for-profit production company. The charity's purpose is to promote education for sustainability.

We were invited to attend the Green Gathering in 2026 in order to share our impressions with the board of trustees of the Green Gathering Charity. We were asked in to look at the event's education for sustainability aspect. We were to act as a 'fresh pair of eyes' to visit, experience and then report back. We offer our thoughts to help the board to consider how the event meets its education for sustainability purpose and prompt discussion about how it might develop further.

Who are we?

We are Bryan and Vicky Lipscombe from Sticky Exhibits Community Interest Company. Sticky Exhibits is a small not-for-profit 100% volunteer-run organisation. We help those who promote education for sustainability at events. Our usual focus is on engaging people to start conversations about sustainability topics using creative resources (exhibits, props and models). We have been doing this for over 20 years. During this time Sticky Exhibits has built a collection of creative educational resources which have been used at multiple events large and small across Britain. In the early years of Sticky Exhibits, Bryan completed doctoral research focused on the impact of extra-curricular education for sustainability. This academic research has shaped our approach since. It informs the thinking in this review.

The review presented here, though not a typical Sticky Exhibits activity, supports both the community of interest we were established to serve – people who promote sustainability through events - and our purpose to advance education for sustainability.

This is not a formal inspection or audit report. We are not education 'inspectors' passing judgement on the event or scoring it against some 'ideal' standard. We are fellow non-formal educators sharing insights with our peers to prompt wider reflection. The report is offered in good faith to support an organisation pursuing a positive purpose.

Understanding education for sustainability

As a foundation for this review, we think it is helpful to examine the idea of education for sustainability and related concepts in more detail. We do this at the outset to help situate our ideas in the context of wider academic thinking.

What do we mean by education?

We use the term **education** primarily to signify an activity that fosters learning in order to develop knowledge.

We understand, given the charity's objectives, that the Green Gathering is delivered with the intention to foster education for sustainability. As a festival-type event we expect the educational interventions delivered will be **non-formal** in character. This contrasts with conventional **formal education** delivered in schools, colleges and universities where interventions usually follow a specific curriculum and the progress of learners is tested in exams.

The **education system** can have several functions sometimes at odds with each other (Sterling 2001, p. 25):

- A socialisation function – helping replicate society and preserve its culture;
- A vocational function – training people for work;
- A liberal function – helping individuals develop their potential; and,
- A transformative function - helping encourage change to a fairer society and better world.

We would expect the educational 'offer' at the Green Gathering to support a transformative purpose, being explicitly 'for sustainability' promoting change for a fairer society and a better world. We would also expect it to serve a liberal function by helping festival goers develop their potential.

What do we understand by learning?

If education is an activity designed to foster learning, then it is useful to unpack what **learning** is too. Learning doesn't need education to happen. It takes place naturally as we assimilate impressions formed during interactions with our environment. When new impressions do not fit with the mental structures we've already built, we develop new ones. This cognitive process involves psychological energy with feelings, emotion, attitudes and motivation (Illeris, 2002).

A key point is what educators set out to 'teach' rarely equates directly to what is 'learned' (Falk & Dierking, 2002; Illeris, 2002). Teaching and learning are often talked about as if there is a straight line between them. The teacher holds the 'jug' containing knowledge. This knowledge is then transferred to the learner as if they are an empty 'mug'. In reality, the mug is rarely empty. Every learner will carry their own existing frames of reference and emotional predispositions. No two people will learn exactly the same things from the same educational experience. For common knowledge to take root, we may need multiple educational interventions in different forms that can 'speak' with each learner's prior experience.

Learning can happen throughout life. Formal education, however, is typically focused on our formative years as society seeks to equip each new generation with a common knowledge. Non-formal educational interventions such as the Green Gathering thus have potential to provide an impetus for learning beyond formal education and throughout life.

There are several additional concepts related to learning that seem particularly pertinent to promoting education for sustainability in an outdoor greenfield festival-type environment:

Tacit learning helps to explain how we unconsciously process a multitude of interactions in day-to-day living into a “knowledge” that can impact on our understanding, insight, values and opinions (Illeris, 2002, p. 178). Much of this tacit knowledge does not have a verbal form: “we know more than we can tell” (Polanyi, 1967, p. 4). In an unsustainable world, the environments where educational interventions take place often reflect this wider unsustainability. There is an opportunity at an event like the Green Gathering to create an environment that speaks ‘for sustainability’ not just through the educational ‘content’ delivered but tacitly too.

Free-choice learning where “the learner exercises a large degree of choice and control over the what, when and why of learning” (Falk, 2005, p. 265). We expect the nature of an event like the Green Gathering to offer the potential for a varied menu of opportunities that supports free-choice learning.

Social learning arising from participation in group problem-solving or deliberative processes (Illeris, 2002). This group learning approach is often associated with education for sustainability. If “sustainability can usefully be thought of as the emergent property of a conversation about desired futures” (Robinson, 2004, p. 381) then there needs to be a “space for social learning” (Corcoran & Wals 2004, p. 224) where this conversation can happen. We expect that the Green Gathering, as an event where people come together can create such spaces for social learning.

What do we understand by sustainability?

We view **sustainability** as a vital contemporary concept that is focused on human progress and the necessity for this to happen within ecological limits.

Concerns about the relationship between human progress and the environment are not new. Their expression through the idea of sustainability, however, is relatively recent. The idea of sustainability is closely associated with the concept of **sustainable development**. Some view sustainable development as the journey and sustainability as the destination (Scott and Gough, 2003).

The concept of sustainable development rose in prominence following the report of World Commission on Environment and Development chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland (WCED., 1987). The widely reproduced, Brundtland “definition” of sustainable development argues for development which: “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED., 1987, p. 9). Since this expression there has been an explosion of definitions of sustainable development and sustainability as people have tried to translate it into practice. This has led some to imply these concepts are almost meaningless. Gow (1992, p. 51) suggested that “sustainability is like happiness - everyone believes in it and everyone has a different definition”.

Whilst some see the ambiguity as a problem, others like Jacobs (1999) simply see sustainability as a political concept. Political concepts like ‘freedom’ or ‘democracy’ are not meaningless but become contested when interpreted in practice. Most will recognise a core meaning for sustainability, but there may be fierce debate about what this should mean when it comes to practical implementation. We expect that the shape of each new Green Gathering will have been in part the outcome of a conversation about sustainability. The event will likely evolve as this debate continues and understanding develops and knowledge grows.

What does this mean for education for sustainability?

Having unpacked the ideas within education for sustainability, it's now worth considering them together as **education for sustainability** more deeply.

Agenda 21 was the first major global plan of action, post-Brundtland, where nations around the world committed themselves to the use of education to advance sustainable development (United Nations, 1992). The language used then, and by many since, includes two dimensions:

- Education as an instrument to change awareness and behaviour, and
- Education as a means to help fulfil human potential.

Governments and Non-Governmental Organisations typically tend to focus on the former aspect, and educationalists the latter (Vare & Scott, 2007). Some educationalists have a problem with education being used to prescribe particular actions. Vare and Scott (2007), however, argue that it is useful to view these two aspects as interrelated and complementary approaches. They are two sides of the same coin. One is "Promoting/facilitating changes in what we do." and, "Promoting (informed, skilled) behaviours and ways of thinking, where the need for this is clearly identified and agreed" (Vare and Scott, 2007 p 193). The other is "Building capacity to think critically about [and beyond] what experts say and to test sustainable development ideas" and, "Exploring the contradictions inherent in sustainable living" (Vare and Scott, 2007 p 194). Neither aspect should dominate. We need education to both promote action now, and to build our ability to think critically about what we do, so we can adapt dynamically as our understanding develops.

Writer on sustainable education Stephen Sterling (2001) believes it is unrealistic to expect the formal education system to change the world. With formal education being a sub-system of the wider socio-economic system, a more realistic focus should be on how society and the education system can change hand-in-hand in mutually supporting ways (Sterling 2001, 2003). The formal educational response to sustainability is most likely to be simply including content *about* sustainability. It is much harder to support the deeper critical engagement needed to be *for* sustainability. In this context, non-formal education has a potentially important role to stimulate more critical thinking and develop ideas in wider society, so that society and the education system can change hand-in-hand.

To achieve sustainability Sterling argues we also need a change in the way we think about knowledge (Sterling, 2009). He highlights that in contemporary western culture the dominant way that we are taught to think separates humanity from nature. We understand nature and seek to control it through the application of science and technology. In contrast, he argues, sustainability requires a shift to embrace an emerging ecological outlook. Here the metaphor is of a living organism rather than a machine. Through this lens we are not apart from nature but part of it (Sterling 2001, 2003, 2009).

If we accept the need for a fundamental change in the way we think about knowledge, educating *for* sustainability cannot simply be about teaching new content. Educators need to learn to think differently themselves. Non-formal education *for* sustainability focused events such as the Green Gathering could be important incubator spaces for nurturing this new ecological worldview both in wider society and amongst educators.

Method

The method for this review followed an immersive approach. In effect we participated in the festival as first time visitors.

We were invited to experience the Green Gathering so we did our best to do so as 'naturally' as possible. We took part in a variety of activities listed in the event programme. We watched artists and performers. We wandered around the events numerous zones and spaces calling in at a variety of the venues, stalls and bars on route. We chatted with people who we met along the way. We ate, drank and made merry and rested between times.

Though we tried to experience the event in a natural way, our participation was also driven by our assignment to review it. We were festival goers with a purpose. We had thought about what we needed to do in advance. We discussed questions of interest. We also considered ethical matters. This included making the purpose of our presence clear so the people we questioned knew what we were doing.

We also made clear in advance what we weren't going to do. We were not going to formally interview people and record their testimony and experiences to amass large quantities of data for quantitative or qualitative analysis. We were not in a position to measure educational impact and outcomes beyond describing our own experiences as adults. We were not there to review the event's wider environmental impact. We were not there to make a judgement of the event's 'performance'.

In preparation for the event, we viewed the [Green Gathering](#) and [Green Gathering Charity](#) websites to learn more about the event in advance. We considered how the event positioned itself and how it communicated sustainability from the get go. We looked at how the charity communicated its educational purpose. We also looked at the various policies and guides used to communicate to visitors, contractors and volunteers. We looked again at this material after the event.

The event took place from the afternoon of Thursday 30th July to the end of Sunday 2nd August 2026. The bulk of the programmed activities commenced on Friday. There were some activities on Thursday too. We arrived on Tuesday evening before the event opened. We camped in the area set aside for crew and volunteers in the 'Campaigns Zone'.

Ahead of the event we were given a tour of the different parts of the site so we had some prior orientation. We were also introduced to several of the charity's trustees and to directors from the production company Optimistic Trout CIC.

Once the event opened on Thursday 30th July, we purchased programmes and made a loose plan of activity. We attempted to ensure that between us we visited all the zones across the site and took part in a broad range of activities. It was impossible to do everything - as two people we could only be in two places at once. We undertook many activities apart and some together. The appendix to this report includes a list of the timetabled activities and performances that we engaged with by area and day.

To aid our own recollections of the experience we carried notebooks to jot down thoughts and reminders. We routinely shared reflections 'back at base' between times to discuss observations and emerging ideas.

After the event, over a period of several months, we considered this material off and on and discussed it further in order to distil our main thoughts and capture them in this report.

Reflections

On-line positioning

We observed that the Green Gathering Charity website makes clear the charity's role promoting education for sustainability. When elaborating what this means the [page on education for sustainability](#) (Green Gathering Charity, July, 2026) states:

"Working to help Reclaim our Future!

Education for Sustainability is interrelated with the concept of Global Citizenship and promotes a rethink of educational programmes and systems that currently support unsustainable societies. The values for sustainability are founded in social and economic justice, environmental responsibility and positive dispositions towards cultural diversity.

We note that this statement includes explicit acceptance of rethinking "education programmes and systems". We also note the attention drawn to specific values associated with sustainability.

The page also quotes UNESCO, asking:

"What if education systems prepared learners to enter the workforce as well as handle a crisis, be resilient, become responsible citizens, adapt to change, recognize and solve local problems with global roots, meet other cultures with respect, and create a peaceful and sustainable society? Then we would be educating for a more sustainable future." (*United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*)

The implication of this quotation is again a need to change education systems to support sustainability. There is also a focus on values not just equipping people with skills.

The page's explanation also spells out some of the focus areas stating:

'The Green Gathering supports educational initiatives related to
sustainable energy sources,
ecologically benign lifestyles,
sustainable food production and
the responsible use of resources.

We noted these specific topics. Our expectation was that that we would find evidence of educational activity related to them at the event.

The education for sustainability web page concludes with a comment of how the event should function as a creative learning environment:

"Our event provides platforms for artistic expression and forums for debate in which issues may be discussed openly and without intimidation."

We noted these aspects. Again, we arrived at the event with the expectation we would experience a variety of artistic expression, find spaces for discussion and debate, and would witness this conducted in a respectful manner.

Elsewhere on the charity's website the ['what do we do' page](#) (Green Gathering Charity, October, 2026) elaborates more on education for sustainability

"Our event provides platforms for artistic expression and opportunities for learning about renewable energy, low impact living, sustainable food production and responsible use of resources. We favour environments in which novices can build confidence and creativity can be applied to ecological and social dilemmas. We facilitate networking and skill-sharing between individuals and groups working in these areas. We call this Education for Sustainability."

This description underlines the importance attributed to creating a supportive environment to help learners to address contemporary issues, and the use of networking and skill sharing. It hints at the importance of coming together for social learning. It also underlines the value of creativity in finding solutions to the issues we face.

The page concludes by stating:

"Education for sustainability addresses our need to creative, to be part of a community, and to take individual approaches to learning and expressing ourselves."

We read this as acceptance of the power of creativity and building community but also recognition that different people learn in different ways. It implies diverse educational approaches are needed.

The [green gathering's website](#) served a wider educational function by providing further information about the event's unique form and content, its origin and history, the ethos, policies and practices behind it, and various resources and guides. Notable parts of the website included:

- The ['how green' page](#) (Green Gathering, October 2026a) that details specific policies and how they are being implemented across a range of topics linked to sustainability
- The ['resources' page](#) (Green Gathering, October 2026b) that shares learning and experience from running previous events again across a range of topics linked to sustainability. The resources shared to help others include detailed descriptions of approaches taken, 'how to' guides, audits of past events, terms and conditions for traders, and examples of positive approaches to equality, inclusion and representation

We found the information contained across the two websites combined to be very informative. It indicated a shape for the educational offer that we might find at the event. It contributes to the education for sustainability purpose too, particularly for educating others running events.

Impressions on arrival

On arrival it felt unusual to simply pull up and camp. In the build up to the event there was a hive of activity as people were busy working to get their part of the Green Gathering ready.

Arriving in advance, which was not the typical experience of a paying participant, meant we began to form impressions of the event before it had started. We were impressed by the scale and character of the site. Our orientation walk underlined the variety of zones and spaces being created across the undulating topography. These zones were spread around across open ground and woodland with the derelict shell of Piercefield House in the background looming over the site.

An early impression was of a gathering community. There were already a significant number of people on site. Some were likely paid contractors but many were volunteers. Regardless, people were there with a purpose to help make the event. There were multiple crews or teams playing their part in different areas to

create the many elements of the event and its supporting infrastructure. It was clearly a complex operation, but we had a sense that this work was being undertaken by and guided by experienced people who had done it before and knew what they were doing. To us there was the strong sense of a purposeful community.

The community assembled was in effect co-creating the event environment. There was clearly an overarching plan and some hard limits guiding these preparations. There also appeared to be strong devolution and delegation affording practical flexibility and space for creativity. The final result was part born of community dialogue which included debate and negotiation. For example, there was some debate over the decision to ban communal fires with tinder dry conditions across much of the country. Alternative artistic installations were developed at the planned sites for fires. The ban itself helped illustrate an impact of climate change and our need for adaptation.

Our introductions to the trustees and directors were spread over several days. Everyone we met was involved on a practical level in some way creating and delivering the event.

Event experience

We enjoyed a positive event experience and took part in numerous activities of an educational and creative nature that promoted learning relating to sustainability in its widest sense.

We noted an extensive and diverse menu of free-choice learning opportunities that visitors could engage with. We experienced a varied sample of these activities. Our eyes could see - and our programmes confirmed - that there were far more things going on than we could fit in. We noted that there were educational initiatives covering the topics identified in the charity's website and many more topics covered beside. We also noted that demand for some activities was extremely high outstripping supply. One person we met had tried to join a particular session at two previous gatherings so had made a beeline on this occasion to book a place well in advance.

As highlighted in the previous section outlining our method, the timetabled activities and performances that we engaged with each day are listed in the appendix. There were many more non timetabled interactions too as we visited stalls, catering outlets and bars or happened upon more random performances or artistic works. Looking back, we learned a lot and came away with new ideas, skills and practices and inspiration. Table 1 details some of what we have taken away.

Table 1: Our personal learnings after visiting the Green Gathering

Vicky gained practical knowledge about perennial veg and has since invested in cuttings and with a plan to introduce perennials at the allotment

Bryan gained skills and knowledge about solar energy systems through participation in the practical 12V solar workshop. He is planning to use this knowledge to redeploy salvaged parts from a mobile solar installation to provide power for battery charging in the garden shed.

Vicky has adopted mindfulness practices that she learned at a healing circle workshop

Bryan wrote poetry for the first time since school whilst taking part in a poetry workshop. His inspiration was lying awake thinking about this review and the event's educational impact. You can find it at the beginning of this report.

Vicky is now motivated to take action on water courses having attended various sessions on water related issues covering drought, flooding pollution and ownership issues

Bryan has been mulling ideas over relating to AI and trying to disengage from Big Tech. His participation in workshops on these topics prompted further reflections on his own current experiment of trying to live news free for the year and in particular the toxic triad of news, social media and AI.

Vicky enjoyed the women's health discussions and found the psychology and social change session particularly thought provoking

Bryan found Pete the Temp's presentation on Romantics, Mystics and Revolutionaries inspiring. He is trying to capture and channel some re-enchantment 'energy' into the development of a new exhibit for Sticky Exhibits that underlines the power of co-operation.

Bryan and Vicky both learned more about fermentation to preserve foods but have yet to pursue this further.

Bryan and Vicky have both been encouraging participation in screenings of the Peoples Climate Emergency Briefing and sharing the tips for local groups hosting such events.

Bryan and Vicky both experienced joy and connection with nature by joining in the 'absurd devotional tree ceremony'. Vicky is still singing devotional tree songs to our niece's baby.

Bryan would like to explore hay box and solar cooking further having chatted with people at the SF Innovations and SLICK Solar Cooking.

Many of the personal learnings we took away related to participation in talks, discussions, workshops, or practical sessions to try something new. It is also important to comment on the value of the various music, spoken word and comedy performances we witnessed. Several artists we saw used their art to critique society, promote understanding, or help us laugh about our predicament. Sometimes it was just good to let our hair down.

We observed that many of the intentions for the event, expressed through the various statements, policies and purposes published online were being put into practice. This was clearly evident with respect to the design and implementation of the event's infrastructure. For example, we witnessed off grid renewable energy systems, significant 'waste' resource separation facilities, and prominent provision of composting toilets as well as urinals for different genders (with "pee-equal" squat-and-go urinals found next to traditional stand-up ones). Whilst the following list is not exhaustive, the prior intentions and policies set out in the Green Gathering's website were also evident through:

- The multiple spaces and places created to host talks, facilitate discussions and debate, promote networking and the sharing of skills and learning about campaigns.
- The respectful nature of debate and discussion
- Stalls to showcase crafts, alternative technologies, promote projects, causes, campaigns and action.
- Places to unwind and relax, enjoy nature and chill.

- Venues and stages for music, poetry and comedy and wider spaces for interaction and performance and artistic expression.
- 100% vegetarian catering provision with significant vegan menus too.

We think it is significant to note that the festival environment we experienced felt like it was stepping well beyond the current event 'norm' towards sustainability. The awards the festival had previously received listed on the Green Gathering website seemed well earned. Our sense was of an event that was actively seeking to lead by example. We believe this is particularly important for an event that is promoting education for sustainability. The tacit 'message' from the event environment that had been created was thus in sync with the event's purpose.

In addition to noting plenty of educational activities that supported a transformation towards sustainability, we felt the gathering served another key educational function too. We were left with a clear impression that it also fulfilled the function of replicating culture. In this case sustaining a counter cultural tradition.

We attended a presentation early in the event on the history of the green gathering. This traced its lineage back in time. It illustrated links to early ecological politics, protest and peace movements, and the traveller and free festival scenes. It also told of several attempts by the state to break earlier gatherings to suppress this counter cultural threat.

It was not just the history talk that led us to view the gathering as serving the purpose of sustaining or replicating a counter cultural tradition. We already sensed the event functioned as a 'gathering of the clans' with many people we encountered being returning participants - people re-grouping and recharging to sustain their activities beyond. The significant proportion of working volunteers added to the sense of a community coming together to co-create the latest instalment of an established tradition. We also encountered people engaged in protest, radical activism, and ecological politics, people who were veterans of the free festival scene and people from traveller communities who recounted first-hand accounts of significant events in the history of related events.

We began to see the event as the latest iteration in a much longer tradition of gatherings. Combined these have maintained space for an alternative outlook. This outlook could be viewed as vital for fostering an education for sustainability that is based on a deeper criticism of the mainstream and capable of envisaging a radically different positive future. The event thus keeps open paths to different possibilities. It draws on a shared counter cultural heritage but invites newcomers to join in and glimpse alternative sustainable futures as well as learn skills to move towards them.

An early question that arose in our discussions on day one concerned the name of the event. Is the event a gathering of greens – politically green or just green thinking, or a gathering that is green, or a bit of both? Our ultimate conclusion was it was both. On the political side we noted the early link with the ecology party for the first green gathering when attending the talk on the history of the event. We noted the leader of the Green Party was a speaker at the 2026 event too. We also noted Green Party Peer Jenny Jones is a patron of the charity via the website. There thus appeared a strong connection to green politics. Our impression having experienced the event was it was much more diverse than this. You didn't have to be a 'card carrying' green to fit in.

As first-timers we felt welcome at the event. We also had a positive response when explaining our purpose. Several people independently responded we were acting like festival 'mystery shoppers' (even though we weren't trying to hide our purpose). People also seemed happy that those behind the event were eager to learn and develop its purpose by inviting people like us along to view it through fresh eyes and feedback.

Attending the “meet the green gathering charity” session held on the final day in the Speaker’s forum left several impressions. The event’s efforts to minimise impact and be sustainable in its widest sense came across as the evolving expression of a conversation about what this means. The community ethos was evident, the trustees were there for the wider community answering questions, listening to concerns and suggestions. The responses shed light on the practicalities and complexities of running such an event and some of the compromises, but a willingness to listen and evolve. The final question ‘why do you do it’ illustrated humanity, passion and drive, and belief in the event as a positive force.

Conclusions and opportunities for further consideration

Our overarching sense was that the Green Gathering 2026 was delivered in a way that was compatible with the charity’s purpose to promote education for sustainability.

We believe that delivering such a unique education for sustainability-focused event is an achievement worth celebrating. We felt the gathering has found a sweet spot, that successfully blends entertainment and creative artistic expression with a substantial programme of education, networking and skill sharing focused around achieving sustainability and its related objectives. We congratulate all those involved in making the event what it is.

The dynamic nature of sustainability means that any educational interventions to help advance it must also be responsive and evolve. The event cannot stand still but must develop its offer. In this context, we suggest four topic areas that the board of trustees may wish to reflect on further. These are areas where we believe further consideration could yield action that would enhance the event’s education for sustainability work and boost its impact further.

Topic 1: Deepening connections with the formal education community

We think it would be beneficial to consider ways the charity could deepen connections with those working in educational roles in the formal education system – schools, universities and colleges. If educators interested in sustainability need to learn to see the world through a different lens and the Green Gathering is a potential vehicle to facilitate this change, then it makes sense to explore options to achieve deeper connections with formal education and ensure more educators can experience the gathering.

There are many potential ways connections could be developed such as offering discounted tickets for teachers or inviting more educators and academics active in education for sustainability to lead talks or workshop sessions at the event on the topic of sustainable educational practice.

One idea is the potential for an educators’ fellowship-type scheme. Educators could apply to the charity to be a part of this fellowship. Those successful would be invited to attend the Green Gathering. As part of their attendance, they could meet other ‘fellows’ and participate in education focused workshops. In return for acceptance in the fellowship, educators would commit to implement a related project to translate ideas for education for sustainability into their own educational practice. One year’s intake could then become the hosts for the next. They could help share experiences from the projects delivered in the intervening time. This would help to grow and strengthen the fellowship community further.

Should the trustees choose to run with this theme of developing deeper connections with the formal education community, whatever ideas are developed we would recommend reaching out to teachers and lecturers already part of the wider Green Gathering community to help develop or refine these ideas to maximise the chance of their success.

Topic 2: Developing interpretation of the event infrastructure story

We think there is an opportunity to further develop interpretation concerning event infrastructure on the festival site to tell the sustainability story more explicitly for people at the event.

The challenge of laying on an multi-faceted multi-day multi-venue off-grid event on a green field site with thousands camping over is no doubt significant. The awards received by the Green Gathering listed on the website confirm the event is a class leader. We had noted that there is more in-depth information on the Green Gathering website 'how green' page about what the festival is doing across a range of policy areas. We felt there remained an opportunity to tell more of this story explicitly onsite too, not just on the website.

We believe an obvious opportunity for further communication is presented at the point of use of facilities such as toilets, taps, and resource collection hubs. We think simple signage could add impact in these places. To an extent this was realised in some areas. For example, the simple "story" of the composting toilets was told on the inside of the cubicle doors.

Topic 3: Developing interpretation of the charity's educational objectives at the 'charity home'

If education for sustainability is the main purpose of the charity, we think there is an opportunity to say more about this at the 'charity home' stall onsite. We envisage an opportunity for some exhibit materials that say more about the charity's purpose alongside what it is doing to achieve it. We note there is material about this online already which could make a useful starting point

The display board on legacies of enslavement that acknowledged the links between Piercefield Park and wealth derived from slavery, was a good example of one of the projects progressed by the charity. We know there are other projects that could also be brought to light. But a key glue between them all would be spelling out clearly the overarching purpose of the in charity.

Topic 4: Political pluralism - or broadening the appearance of the church to grow a vibrant congregation

If education for sustainability relies on changing society and its educational sub-system hand-in-hand, then an event promoting it needs to focus on both aspects. Changing society is linked with shaping wider political discourse and debate. The participation of people involved in politics, including politicians, clearly matters.

Our early question about the nature of the event's greenness and the extent to which it was allied to the green party, led us to reflect that the appearance of the event mattered and could act as a barrier if perceived narrowly. Was this an exclusive event, or one what welcomed diversity of views from people of different political traditions or none? Our conclusion having experienced the event

suggested it was the latter. We came to the view the Green Gathering as a green event in several ways. It took place on a greenfield site and was run in an ecologically informed 'green' way. It was also gathering of 'green-minded' people in the widest sense, i.e. people with an interest in advancing sustainability encompassing ecological sustainability and social progress. It was also part of a 'green tradition' having roots in ecological politics and evident support and participation from those active in the green party today.

We raise this point for reflection and discussion as we feel steps could be taken to make it clearer this is not a narrow event but one that embraces political pluralism. We struggled with how to name this topic and settled on broadening the *appearance* of the church. We are not arguing for a new name or the down-playing of links with green politics, but perhaps some clearer signals that the gathering is not exclusive and green in its widest sense and welcoming to all.

We hope this review is received as more than a box ticking exercise – “yes education for sustainability was delivered”, or a well-earned pat on the back – “you’re doing a great job, carry on”. We expect the board of trustees will be interested in further discussion of opportunities to develop its work on education for sustainability going forwards. If this report helps stimulate this discussion we would be delighted.

Finally, we would like to express our thanks to the board of trustees for the inviting us to experience the Green Gathering. We extend our thanks to the wider community that makes the event what it is, and to those who led or contributed to the activities we participated in or spoke to us about their experiences. We apologise in advance for any mistakes or misunderstandings. The impressions we have shared are ours alone. They are shared in good faith and with goodwill in the hope they will assist and support the event going forward.

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Appendix

The following tables capture the main timetabled activities and performances we experienced each day during Green Gathering 2026

Table A1: Activities engaged with on Thursday 30th July 2026

Area	Timetabled activity/performance
Campaigns	Speakers' forum: • New adventures in democracy • History and philosophy of the green gathering
Soundscape	• 3 Daft Monkeys
Uncommon	• Cheap leads

Table A2: Activities engaged with on Friday 31st July 2026

Area	Timetabled activity/performance
Campaigns	Workshop tent: • Psychology and social change: handle with care • Resist artificial intelligence Speakers' forum: • Heatwave: what's coming and how do we manage • Adaptation panel
Raconteurs	• Ukejam • Great Aunt Tranni • Kaz Wood
Soundscape	• She drew the gun
TrAd Village	• Climate Emergency Centres
Triban	• Seize The Day
Uncommon	• Professor Queen Bee • Kitty Stuart Trio • Border Control

Table A3: Activities engaged with on Saturday 1st August 2026

Area	Timetabled activity/performance
Campaigns	Workshop tent: - Leaving corporate “big tech” is a long journey Resource hub: - Practical 12v Solar Speakers’ forum: - Water a dirty business - The media state - The world beyond 1.5C Women’s space - What the f*ck is wrong with me? Managing hormones naturally
Floating Lotus	- Laughter Yoga - Absurd Devotional Tree Ceremony with Om Skanky
Raconteurs	- Poetry from the forward prizes - Creative sparks poetry workshop - Mark Thomas - Pete the Temp - Samuel Hurley
Voices of Gaia	Extinction resilience

Table A4: Activities engaged with on Sunday 2nd August 2026

Area	Timetabled activity/performance
Campaigns	Speakers’ forum: - Meet the green gathering charity - Romantics, mystics and revolutionaries - Peoples’ emergency briefing - Iconic photography
Healing Circle	Mindfulness, meditation and stress reduction
Permaculture	Earth Care Space - Perennial and unusual veg People Care Space - Fermentation and foraging from food preservation to preserving your gut biome
Triban	Global collective
Voices of Gaia	World Peace Mantra