

Festival

A. Planning

- Importance of the issue with reference to aspects of sustainability

Economic – the wool price has been dropping for the past 10 years. Many sheep farmers have converted to Dairy, because they can no longer make a profit out of selling wool. Local farmers told us that they have wool bales stacked up in sheds because they are worth nothing and are changing from running wool-breeds to meat-breeds of sheep. Local shearers cannot find work and have to go overseas, particularly through the winter. All this has an economic impact on our local economy, as local farmers spend less or disappear altogether.

Environmental – sheep have a smaller carbon footprint than cows. The more wool we have, the fewer cows there will be, and the lower the environmental impact. Already, we have huge problems with runoff from dairy farms into our rivers. Raising the profile of wool would help lessen this. Also, wool is a healthy product, and should be supported.

Social – our local society has been built on the networks that sheep farming brings, eg. people come together to help shear, tail and lamb, or to share equipment. Lambing is a busy time when nothing else happens in the community, but for the rest of the year the sheep farmers help run local committees and support local groups etc. Wool has an entire craft industry that relies on it, with all the skills that brings.

Cultural - wool has been tied up with our heritage and identity. This will gradually disappear if wool disappears. ①

- We posted a poll on the Valley Bulletin page, asking the locals what they knew about wool and whether the wool industry was important to them. We got 42 replies within the first day! Most said that wool was important to them.
- We decided to organise a fest at our school to promote wool. ②
- how data is to be gathered and analysed.

We researched information for our expo using peer-reviewed sites and local knowledge, in order to get things right as much as possible. We didn't want to convey misinformation to the local children.

We sent out a Google Docs survey before the event to collect information about what our school students knew about wool, and then collect similar information on a quiz after the children had been through the expo, so that we could compare the two results, and see what had been learned. ③

- any ethical considerations
Health and Safety. Correct information. Students missing class (including us!) Issues with us promoting sheep farming rather than dairy ④
- time-frame and steps required to take action [A 6 step timetable produced by a group of students was provided] ⑤
- what equipment will be used
Classroom and furniture, grass strip outside classroom for shearing, pallets for display, looms and spinning wheels for crafts, wool items for display, food and gifts for crafters, quiz sheets.
- predictions about the impact and expected outcome(s) of your action
We hoped that Festival would be fun and informative and would raise awareness and interest in the wool industry, and that it would become an annual event, helping to strengthen ties between the local community.

- consultation with relevant stakeholders.

We met with school management and our teachers, the caretaker and cleaners, the woolcrafters, the shearers, the Primary Schools, the Media, local farmers, local businesses.

B. Personal action (see 'SG' and 'All' actions within Group Learning Log) We took photos and gathered feedback from the visitors to the festival. **6**

C. Critical evaluation

My personal action related to the aspects of sustainability in the following ways.....

Economic / Environmental – raising awareness of wool might help sustainability further down the track as people consider buying wool items rather than synthetics, and know they are doing their bit to help the industry. The environment will improve with sheep rather than dairy.

D. Conclusions

- The data we collected was mostly qualitative, based on survey results and quiz questions, as well as feedback from stakeholders. Thus, the data was useful, but may have been biased. We really needed to gather data six months or a year down the line and compare this with the original surveys. Perhaps this is something that could be done after next year's festival. **7**
- Our plan was effective in that it gave us an outline for the festival without being too prescriptive. The timeline worked well in that we were able to collect all the necessary equipment and prepare the room the day before the event, even though some things (eg. mobile shearing unit) could only happen on the day. We should have advertised earlier in order to attract more visitors from the community.
- We modified the original plan by asking for a bigger room for the expo, and by including the hands-on demonstrations and shearing. These aspects came about by word-of-mouth and provided a much more hands-on element. **8**
- Personally, I had never thought much about wool and what it means to our region. This project has really made me think about how one person's actions can contribute towards sustainability. I think I will look for more wool-based products, eg. clothes, rather than always buying synthetics, and I will also be more aware of changes in the wool industry.
- In conclusion, Festival has made a difference to the social and cultural sustainability of wool in our region, and might have knock-on effects in terms of economic and environmental sustainability. **9**