

Black Environment Network

Organisational Strategy Document

Contents

Summary	2
Organisational Aims and Objectives	3
Background	5
Introduction	
Reason for establishment	
Key needs	
BEN's Organisational Structure	6
Organisational chart	
The BEN Team	
The Network	
BEN's Partners	
BEN's Core Competencies	10
Key Achievements	
SWOT Analysis	
Strengths	
Weaknesses	
Opportunities	
Threats	
External Influences	14
Funding	
Race relations	
Legislation	
Poverty and disadvantage	
The natural environment	
The built environment	
Heritage and the historic environment	
Arts	
Health	
Housing	
Schools	
Technology	
Conclusion	15

Summary

Vision

To have representation and participation, at all levels, of ethnic communities in the built and natural environment, which reflects the profile of the ethnic population in Britain

Organisational Aims

1. To represent issues and concerns relating to ethnic participation in the built and natural environment
2. To develop training and consultancy services in order to underpin ethnic participation
3. To develop, strengthen and maintain the Network
4. To secure resources in order to maintain and increase operations in England, Wales and Scotland
5. To address current issues and concerns relating to ethnic participation in the natural and built environment

Beneficiaries

BEN's main beneficiaries are ethnic communities and organisations working in sustainable development. We have developed a large network of active local ethnic community groups and individuals across the UK. Ethnic groups need support services in information and advice to enable them to participate fully. Voluntary and statutory organisations need our services to make contact with ethnic communities. They also need information, advice, training and support to enable them to develop greater ethnic participation in their organisations.

Partners

BEN has formed strategic partnerships with statutory agencies, voluntary groups, academic institutions and funders. Partnership development has opened up the partners' resources and networks in support of BEN's aims.

Issues

BEN takes a broad view of the term environment, which includes the natural, built, social and cultural, in order to address the cross cutting issues necessary to underpin ethnic participation. As such BEN deals with a range of issues which include:

- Race Relations and Social Inclusion
- Environmental and Social Justice
- Poverty and Disadvantage
- Natural and Built Environment
- Heritage and Historic environment
- Arts
- Health
- Housing

Funding

Core funding is essential to support BEN's central services in meeting the needs of our beneficiaries. Current income from membership, statutory agencies, lotteries, charitable trusts, training and consultancy is not sufficient to give adequate central support to ethnic groups, organisations and partners.

Organisational Aims and Objectives

Vision

To have representation and participation, at all levels, of ethnic communities in the built and natural environment, which reflects the profile of the ethnic population in Britain

Aims and Objectives

- 1. To represent issues and concerns relating to ethnic participation in the built and natural environment**
 - 1.1 Raise awareness of the significance of ethnic participation, promote the values of ethnic minorities and fuel debate around issues relating to ethnic communities at key conferences and events, through BEN and other networks, and appropriate media outlets
 - 1.2 Undertake research, and provide information and advice to ethnic communities, environmental and other relevant organisations on the values and benefits of ethnic participation
 - 1.3 Undertake consultations and research to identify issues and concerns relating to ethnic participation
 - 1.4 Input into policies which affect ethnic participation in the built and natural environment
 - 1.5 Work with wider issues which affect ethnic participation, e.g. equality issues such as the representation of disadvantaged groups or the redefinition of British identity
 - 1.6 Develop and support the role Network members in representing issues relating to ethnic participation in the built and natural environment

- 2. To develop training and consultancy services in order to underpin ethnic participation**
 - 2.1 Develop structured training programmes for organisations to enable them to work effectively with ethnic communities
 - 2.2 Provide consultancy advice on policy development and organisational change to enable greater ethnic participation
 - 2.3 Build the capacity of ethnic groups to enable them to participate fully in the built and natural environment

3. To develop, strengthen and maintain the Network

- 3.1 Widen the Network to include other sectors which address key issues linking into ethnic participation in the built and natural environment e.g. the heritage, housing, health, outdoor activity and education
- 3.2 Organise conferences, seminars or events which encourage exchange of information and sharing experience
- 3.3 Develop and promote good practice in working with ethnic communities
- 3.4 Initiate events which engage ethnic communities with relevant mainstream organisations
- 3.5 Link environmental and other relevant organisations with ethnic communities and where necessary act as a facilitator to develop engagement
- 3.6 Provide an information, advice and networking service, enabling access by ethnic groups to information, advice, expertise, experience sharing and mutual support.

4. To secure resources in order to maintain and increase operations in England, Wales and Scotland

- 4.1 Obtain funding for projects which have a regional and local focus to provide better quality of services to ethnic communities
- 4.2 Identify funding which provides regular income for the core functions of BEN
- 4.3 Establish a central permanent base for co-ordination and core strategic work
- 4.4 Build BEN's reserves to secure the continuity of the organisation in line with the Charity Commissioner's recommendation to hold reserves equivalent to 2 years of the costs of core functions.

5. To address current issues and concerns relating to ethnic participation in the natural and built environment

- 5.1 Develop projects and partnerships to address current issues and concerns
- 5.2 Initiate new and innovative projects, events and models which push the boundaries of BEN's and its partners' work
- 5.3 Promote relevant new activities within ethnic communities e.g. food growing, cycling, green transport, employment development, walking for health, and countryside recreation

Background

Introduction

The Black Environment Network (BEN) has been established since 1987. BEN is a unique organisation working for full ethnic representation and participation within the built and natural environment, in the context of sustainable development. We use the word 'black' symbolically, recognising that the black communities are the most visible of all ethnic communities. We work with both black, white and other ethnic communities.

Alongside stimulating ethnic participation, we work to inspire and enable environmental and other organisations working in sustainable development to gain the necessary awareness and skills to work effectively with ethnic groups, thereby creating a climate and a framework within which full ethnic environmental participation can take place.

We are instrumental in ground breaking work, promoting the understanding of the values of sustainability within ethnic communities and the significance of ethnic participation in other sectors on sustainable development. We are seen in the UK and abroad as the leader and pioneer in the field of ethnic environmental participation, which we have created.

Reason for Establishment

Many ethnic communities live in some of the worst social and physical environment. Participation in many sectors can enable them to access the best resources available. In the process they may be empowered through gaining essential skills in self-help, self-representation and self-improvement resulting in the self-determination of their quality of life.

Agencies working in the context of sustainable development pledge to be open to everyone, but until BEN highlighted the issue, ethnic community participation had not been on their agenda.

Involving ethnic communities in sustainable development also means bringing forward a vast missing contribution from a significant section of the community.

Key Needs

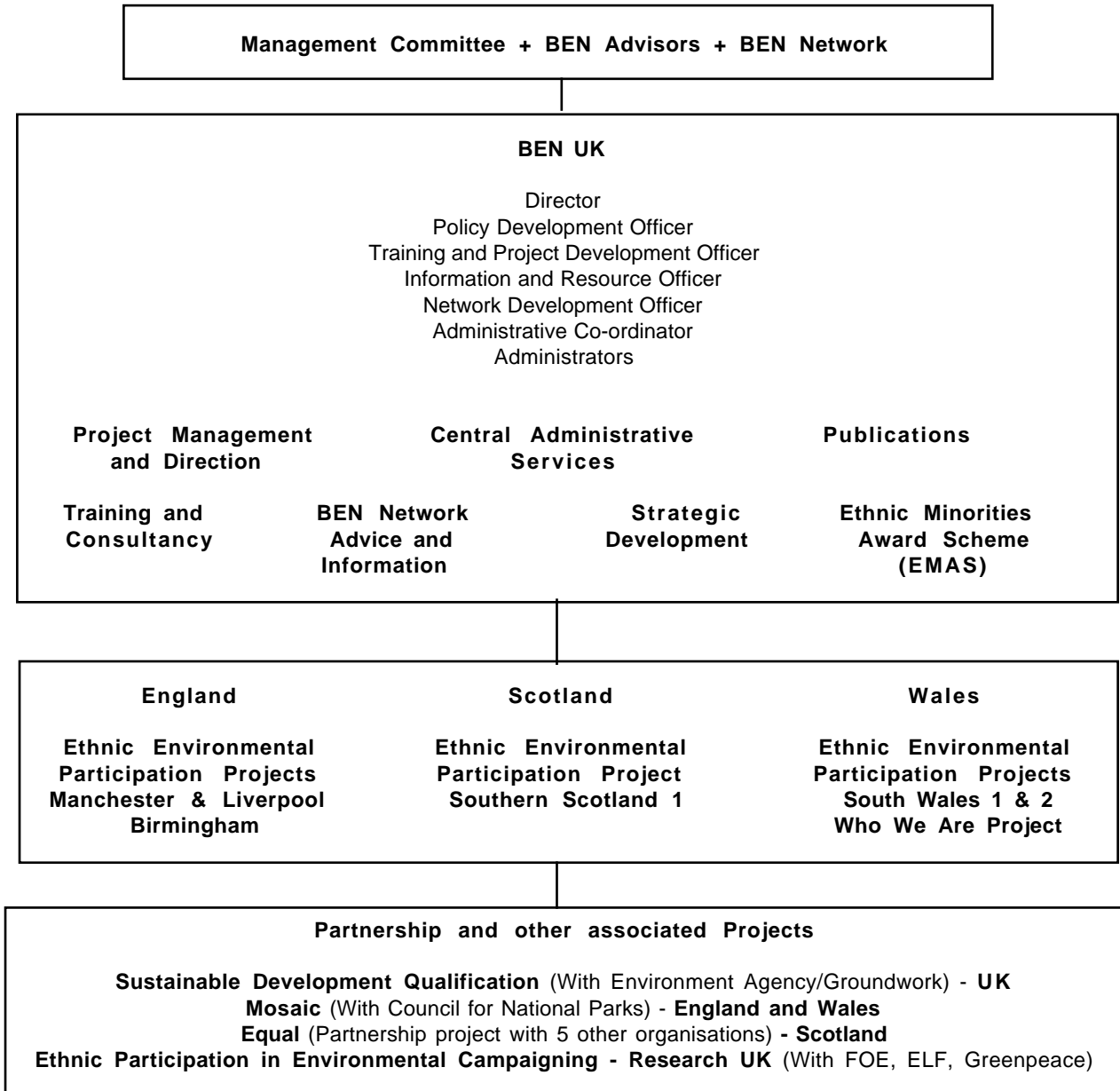
As an organisation BEN works to address:

- The need to put ethnic community participation on the agenda of organisations working in the built and natural environment
- The need to highlight the significance of the contribution of ethnic groups to the built and natural environment
- The need for access to information, advice, resources and expertise by ethnic communities in order to play a full role in the built and natural environment
- The need for developing a range of projects, which integrate social, cultural and environmental, concerns relevant to the specific needs of ethnic groups.
- The need for a training and consultancy service enabling organisations to gain skills which strategically address the involvement of ethnic groups in the built and natural environment

BEN's Organisational Structure

Organisational Chart

The organisation's core staff includes the Director and the Administrators, working to an UK-wide Management Committee and Advisors representing a wide spectrum of expertise, and in consultation with members of the BEN Network.



We are currently working to develop a basis for a project in Northern Ireland to enable organisations working in sustainable development to reach out and work effectively with ethnic communities.

Although our work is focused on the UK, we do have an international dimension as ethnic communities in this country are linked through the culture of their country of origin.

The BEN Team

Central Staff

Judy Ling Wong FRSA

- Direction and management

Henry Adomako

- Training and Project Development
- Policy and Partnership development
- based in Edinburgh

Kathlyn Antoine

- Network development

Pam Green

- Administrative Co-ordinator
- based in Llanberis Wales

Stuart Gordon

- Administrator
- based in Llanberis Wales

Project Staff

James Friel

- Development Worker for Birmingham
- based in Birmingham

Jessica Nar

- Development Worker for the Mosaic Project(in partnership with CNP) for England and Wales
- based in London

Junie Joseph

- Development Worker for the Mosaic Project(in partnership with CNP) for England and Wales
- based in London

Saleem Oppal

- Development Worker for Liverpool and Manchester
- based in Manchester

Siobhan Hayward

- Development Worker for South Wales
- based in Cardiff

Mike Cherry and Omer Williams

- Development Workers for South Wales
- based in Swansea

Other staff working for BEN on specific pieces of work

Val Siviter

- BEN website

Rachel Auckland

- Research and Project Development

The Network

The BEN Network has over 600 members across the UK. The wide range of members include environmental and other relevant organisations (including arts, health and housing organisations, outdoor activity providers, youth, the elderly, funders, policy makers, academics, researchers, community groups, schools and individuals). This diversity opens up enormous possibilities for innovative work and access to expertise, ideas and mutual support. The BEN Network is focused on sharing information and experience, voicing and addressing issues, and promoting significant directions of development in the field of ethnic participation in the built and natural environment.

BEN's Partners

Partners have come on board slowly and were won over by BEN through awareness raising and the creation of successful programmes of work demonstrating new ways of seeing and working. Although we now work with many partners who are key players in the environmental and other related sectors, this work of breaking into formerly closed areas of participation still continues.

BEN believes that ultimately ethnic communities will be able to play a full role only if they are part of the mainstream. The success of BEN will mean doing ourselves out of a job !

Mainstream Environmental and Other Organisations

Partnership work enables BEN to integrate ethnic participation into the mainstream environmental and other relevant organisations. We work to stimulate participation, which we then hand over to mainstream organisations, supporting them to fulfil their remit of working with everyone. This enhances the capacity of ethnic groups to represent themselves effectively and make an intellectual contribution to the development of a range of activities, which are culturally and socially relevant.

Policy Makers and Funders Another significant growth area for BEN is policy formation with government, and policy makers in the voluntary sector and funding sectors. This is an essential part of our work to represent ethnic issues and concerns. However, we are asked to do the work for free, and we are finding difficulty to find money to pay for our involvement in this vital work. This is ultimately an unsustainable situation.

Recent partnership engagements include:

- National Parks: Mosaic. A major partnership project between BEN and the Council for National Parks to enable access by ethnic groups to National Parks in England and Wales
- Member of steering group for Heritage Lottery Fund's research into developing new audiences, producing a resource document for the heritage sector
- DCMS Steering Group for the Review of Policies relating to the Historic Environment, culminating in the document "Power of Place", with recommendations for the Minister and the heritage sector
- DTLR Urban Green Spaces Task Force, culminating in the document "Green Spaces, Better Places" with recommendations for government
- DCMS Policy Committee for Social Inclusion, resulting in the document "People and Places: Social Inclusion Policy for the Built and Historic Environment"
- Member of steering group of Heritage Link and the Power of Place Executive Committee
- Partnership Council - National Assembly for Wales
- Partnership with Environment Agency and Groundwork to produce the Sustainable Development Foundation Course

Ethnic Community Groups

BEN works in close collaboration with ethnic community groups and individuals, involving them from the management through to project participation. BEN liaises with over 100 ethnic community groups who have diverse backgrounds.

BEN recognises the essential role of creativity in the establishment of a new field of endeavour - the engagement of different cultural groups with the built and natural environment of Britain. It is a global and local pool of diverse perspectives brought against a new circumstance, creating exciting new possibilities. All the projects and themes of BEN's work intertwine, feed on each other, mutually underpin developments, and move in and out of different areas spurring new developments.

Academic and Research institutions

Our connections with universities and research institutions have laid down the basis for developing partnership research projects. It is becoming increasingly important to support the representation of ethnic participation with analysis and evaluation. Our work with universities includes:

- With Lancaster University, we have been consistently involved in ground breaking events exploring views of nature and links into culture and creativity.
- Annual lectures at Reading University, introducing the significance of working with diverse communities in environmental sector.
- Innovative work with ethnic groups has led to an association with Erasmus University of Rotterdam around the theme of Arts and Sustainability.
- Consultation with ethnic communities has part of research programmes around environmental themes has risen up the agenda due to the work of BEN. We have been commissioned, for example, by the University of Aberdeen's to facilitate contact and organise the framework for focus groups involving members of the BEN Network.

Core Competencies and Capabilities

BEN is able to:

1. Put ethnic participation on the agenda through innovative work:

- Develop new perspectives on the environment to organisations and community groups
- Provide innovative solutions to social, cultural, economic and environmental concerns
- Espouse social and cultural meaning on the environment
- The ability to inspire involvement with relevant sectors and gain their support

2. Gain the trust of ethnic communities, introduce them to a new area of participation and represent their issues and concerns

- Ability to deliver on projects focused on addressing issues and needs
- Ability to effectively input into consultations and policy
- Be progressive and innovative, creating new models and projects
- Developing stronger participation by ethnic communities
- Expanding the network of organisations and ethnic community groups

3. Create and maintain an efficient and effective organisation

- Committed management committee
- Talented, enthusiastic and committed staff
- High public profile and recognition for the work done
- Growing political support
- Deliver projects with results

4. Provide high quality training

A significant development is a growth in demand for training. Our courses have been incorporated into the programmes of training centres such as Bishop's Wood, the Countryside Agency Sponsored Training Programme. There is a growing understanding of the significance of ethnic involvement, and training which requires awareness and competencies. We have therefore been developing a range of training modules. We also offer tailored training days. Those taking up courses have included:

Statutory agencies	Environment Agency, Sheffield City Council, English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage, North York Moors National Park, Bolton Neighbourhood EDA, National Forest.
Voluntary organisations	National Trust, Avon Wildlife Trust, Groundwork Birmingham, Epping Forest Centenary Trust, Natural Pioneers BTCV, Black Development Agency
Funders	National Heritage Memorial Fund (Heritage Lottery Fund)

5. Provide high quality consultancy services

BEN has undertaken to provide advice to the following organisations:

The Environment Agency	Assistance in acquiring awareness and an assessment of possible directions to take to involve ethnic communities
Bristol City Council	An evaluation of a programme directed at ethnic groups and recommendations for development
National Monument Record (English Heritage)	BEN was engaged to make a presentation on ethnic involvement to the National Monuments Record staff conferences part of English Heritage's strategic action to raise awareness within their organisation
Countryside Council for Wales	Commissioned to write guidelines for involving ethnic groups in environmental participation

Key Achievements

- BEN is recognised nationally and internationally as the leader in the field of ethnic environmental participation which it has created. In the Queen's Birthday Honours 2000 Judy Ling Wong, Director of BEN was honoured as an OBE in recognition of her outstanding work with BEN. This honour also gives recognition to the field of ethnic environmental participation as a discreet and significant area of work.
- BEN has put ethnic community participation on the agenda of policy makes and major agencies in different sectors working in the built and natural environment.
- Ethnic participation in the built and natural environment is constantly promoted through speaking at national and international conferences, running workshops and training days, participating in roundtables for good practice and policy, and working with the media to contribute to public dialogue.
- We continually contribute to policy, develop central concepts on ethnic participation and good practice guidelines through participation in consultation exercises at all levels and publishing discussion papers on the key issues of the day.
- A growing Network - at present 600 members.
- We have published resource materials and papers in order to promote models of good practice, highlight ethnic contribution and maintain a cutting edge dialogue on ethnic participation in sustainable development.
- Partnership and development projects forged to address issues and needs.

Our influence can be demonstrate by the wide ranging engagements in which we have played a key role:

- Governance and Civil Society. British Council Conference. Invitational participation as one of the 100 most significant individuals in civil society. Apr'98
- Culture Society and Environment. 7th International Symposium on Society and Resource Management. USA. Keynote Speaker May'98
- Dircon. The Wildlife Trusts Directors' Conference. Ulster. Speaker Jun'98
- 3rd European Congress for Outdoor Adventure and Experiential Learning. Keynote Speaker. Sep'98
- Botanical Gardens Education Network Conference. Keynote Speaker. Dec'98
- The Year 2000 Art and the Landscape Symposium. Keynote speaker. Mar'99
- Where are the Black Leisure Managers? ILAM. Speaker. May'99
- Council for National Parks 50th Anniversary Conference. Keynote Speaker. Jun'99
- Whose Heritage?" Speaker and workshop. Nov'99
- "Indigenous knowledge" Speaker. Lancaster University Nov'99
- House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee. Evidence on Social Exclusion. April'00
- Government Review on Policies relating to the Historic Environment. Steering Group
- Whose National Trust? National Trust and Ethnic Communities. Speaker. London Jun'00
- Arts and the Environment. Keynote Speaker. Herts Arts Forum Nov'00
- Equity and the Environment. Royal Geographical Society. Paper. London Nov'01
- Forward to Action. London Biodiversity Partnership. London. Speaker Jan'01
- "New Rights, New Responsibilities", Countryside Agency Conference. London . Speaker,. Feb'01 National Trust Gardens Conference. Speaker. Bath 30.4.01
- CRN "Removing Barriers, Creating Opportunities - Social Inclusion in the Countryside". Speaker. London 17.9.01
- Museum Practice seminar "Responding to Cultural Diversity". Speaker. London 18.9.01
- EoE Conference on Outdoor Learning. Marburg. Germany. Speaker. 4.10.01
- History Making : Recovering the past collecting the future. V&A, Archives and Museum of Black Heritage. Speaker 13.10.01
- Museums Association Conference. Chair - Diversity Session. London 31.10.01
- Whose Historic Environment ? Oxford University Continuing Education event. Paper 13.11.01
- Campaign Against Food Poverty. Speaker. London 14.11.01
- Participatory Landscapes Seminar. Chelsea Physic Gardens. London. Speaker 15.2.02
- Planning the Historic Environment. Oxford University. Speaker 17 May'02
-

Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats

BEN's main strength is its ability to work effectively with a wide range of organisations to involve them with ethnic communities. Although its political presence is growing, its weakness is the lack of time and resources to develop an adequate range of influential contacts to affect change. While it is constantly opening up opportunities in various directions to generate income, its main threat remains the lack of funding to secure its continuity and underpin its development .

Strengths

- Develop new perspectives on the environment to organisations and community groups
- Providing innovative solutions to social, cultural, economic and environmental concerns
- Espouse social and cultural meaning to the environment
- The ability to work in other sectors and gain their support
- Ability to deliver on projects focused on addressing issues and concerns
- Progressive and innovative. Able to create new models and projects
- Committed management committee
- Talented, enthusiastic and committed staff
- High public profile and recognised for the work done
- Strong network and support from ethnic communities
- Growing grassroots support from ethnic communities
- Large and wide-ranging network of organisations and community groups

Weaknesses

- Weak overall political connections
- Lack of stable core funding
- Lack of adequate time and resources leading to not enough being done in key areas which can enable BEN to strategically break new ground, e.g. lobbying, policy monitoring and development
- Lack of adequate time and resources to undertake consistent fundraising and development of relationships to potential and existing funders
- Lack of adequate time and resources to fully develop partnership opportunities

Threats

- Unstable funding could close core work and essential projects
- Missed vital developmental opportunities due to lack of time and resources

Opportunities

- Increasing demand for BEN's consultancy
- Increasing demand for BEN's training services
- Increasing ethnic participation
- Growing partnership opportunities
- Growing political support
- Funding priorities relate to BEN's work

External Influences

Funding

The funding market is becoming increasingly competitive from new organisations seeking to establish themselves with funders. In addition fund raising is becoming more difficult as funders tighten their criteria and increase the accountability of their funding support. However funding from the various sources presents a mixed picture of threats and opportunities. Grant funding from central government and the European Community is becoming much more output driven. Funding from charitable trusts is becoming much more refined from their criteria with a greater emphasis on funding one-off projects and developing new and innovative projects.

BEN's expansion into the three countries of the UK has been through the strategic use of project funding which has supported the core to some extent. The impact on the core is of concern when these projects end unless new projects come on line. These facts are reflected in BEN's income growth from statutory sources and the National Lottery and a reduction from charitable trusts.

Race Relations

The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report highlighted the need to tackle organisational change. The Commission for Racial Equality view on the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report was:

"Many important organisations are still failing to act against institutional racism. Decisive steps have been taken by the Home Secretary, by several police forces, by the civil service and by some local authorities, but the pace of change must be stepped up. There is a need for comprehensive action for racial equality across the public, private and voluntary sectors, with the impetus for change coming right from the top... Racial equality must be on the agenda in every boardroom in England, Scotland and Wales."

Commission For Racial Equality Corporate Plan 2000/ 2001

The Home Office action plan after the Inquiry was developing partnerships, creating diversity and rewarding success in the police force. These actions have been developed and are being tackled by BEN with environmental organisations and show the work BEN is doing has considerable value.

In terms of demographic changes to the UK population, there has been a growing wave of migrants from Eastern Europe. In addition the second generation of migrants from the Caribbean and South Asia are rapidly expanding and becoming more integrated with the more established population. This new draft of ethnic communities will place greater demand on BEN's services and put pressure on its resources. BEN is increasingly recognised for its innovative work with asylum seekers and refugees.

Legislation

Social Inclusion is a priority on the government agenda. The key papers from the government include the Equality Statement (ethnic minorities are named as one of the 3 priority groups), the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), and the Human Rights Act which strengthen Equal Opportunities.

Poverty and Disadvantage

BEN's constituencies are disadvantaged ethnic groups, so issues relating to poverty and disadvantage are central to our work. BEN has imaginatively made links into environmental participation, which address quality of life, from growing fresh food to physical improvement of the immediate environment where ethnic groups live.

The Natural Environment

There has been a growing acceptance of global warming and the need to tackle environmental issues on all fronts. Ethnic communities have a significant role to play to the environmental movement, stemming from their cultural and social association with natural environment. The key role which ethnic communities can play is the much touted 'local and global' context of environmental action which needs to be fully exploited. There is a growing recognition for an integrated approach to ethnic involvement, bringing together cultural, social and environmental concerns within environmental projects.

Some environmental organisations have been won over and are now committed to working with ethnic groups. However, there is significant work to be done on other remaining organisations. Additionally support to put organisational change and skills to work effectively with ethnic groups remain our ongoing work.

The Built Environment

Ethnic groups live in some of the most deprived urban environments, where the impact of the built environment has an affect on their well being. The design and provision of suitable living environments such as the provision of social space for leisure and recreation is an important issue for ethnic groups.

Heritage and the Historic Environment BEN has recently taken a major role in working with the heritage sector and organisations working with the historic environment. BEN has forged the concept of “multi-cultural interpretation of the environment”. We propose that as the history of Britain is multi-cultural , it should therefore be expressed in the interpretation of heritage and the historic environment. The day to day recognition of the legitimacy of ethnic presence and the re-framing of the British identity in the interpretation of heritage icons is central to enable ethnic groups to claim a British identity. This is important for the essential setting of ethnic participation as citizens of this country.

Our partnership project “National Parks - Multicultural Initiative“ will be doing innovative work in involving ethnic groups in the development of the multi-cultural interpretation of landscape.

Arts

The arts take a central place in participation because it facilitates cultural connections. It plays a key role in processes which impact on empowerment and representation for vulnerable groups who may not be able initially to directly express their feelings, their needs and concerns and articulate them effectively.

Health

The built and natural environment have significant effects on the health of ethnic communities. There is a role to be played by ethnic groups to transform and influence these in the context of health.

Housing

It is early days for many working in housing to make sustainable development and environmental considerations a central part of improving the quality of life of ethnic communities who live in deprived areas. The internal conditions and the immediate external environment can be enhanced through participation in many environmental areas such as recycling, litter clearance, energy efficiency in the home, insulation standards, greening housing estates, improving public areas through creating suitable play spaces or community gardens, traffic calming or allotments for growing food.

Schools

Schools provide a focused and organised setting in which to connect environmental participation and set it in the context of life from early years. The development of culturally suitable resource materials is important. School grounds can be transformed into places in which cultural presence is recognised and contact with nature made possible.

Technology

The Internet revolution has provided great opportunities to communicate information on a local, national and international basis. Never has there been an age where there is a large sharing of information on a common global platform. The web also offers an opportunity to raise funds from advertising, attracting donors and selling products.

Conclusion

BEN has been, and continues to be ground breaking and influential; linking social, cultural and environmental issues. With the change of the political climate within the UK to one of inclusiveness and participation, the opportunities for our work have never been greater. However, those opportunities demand resources and it is perhaps our greatest challenge to ensure we are adequately funded to make the maximum impact in this time of great change.