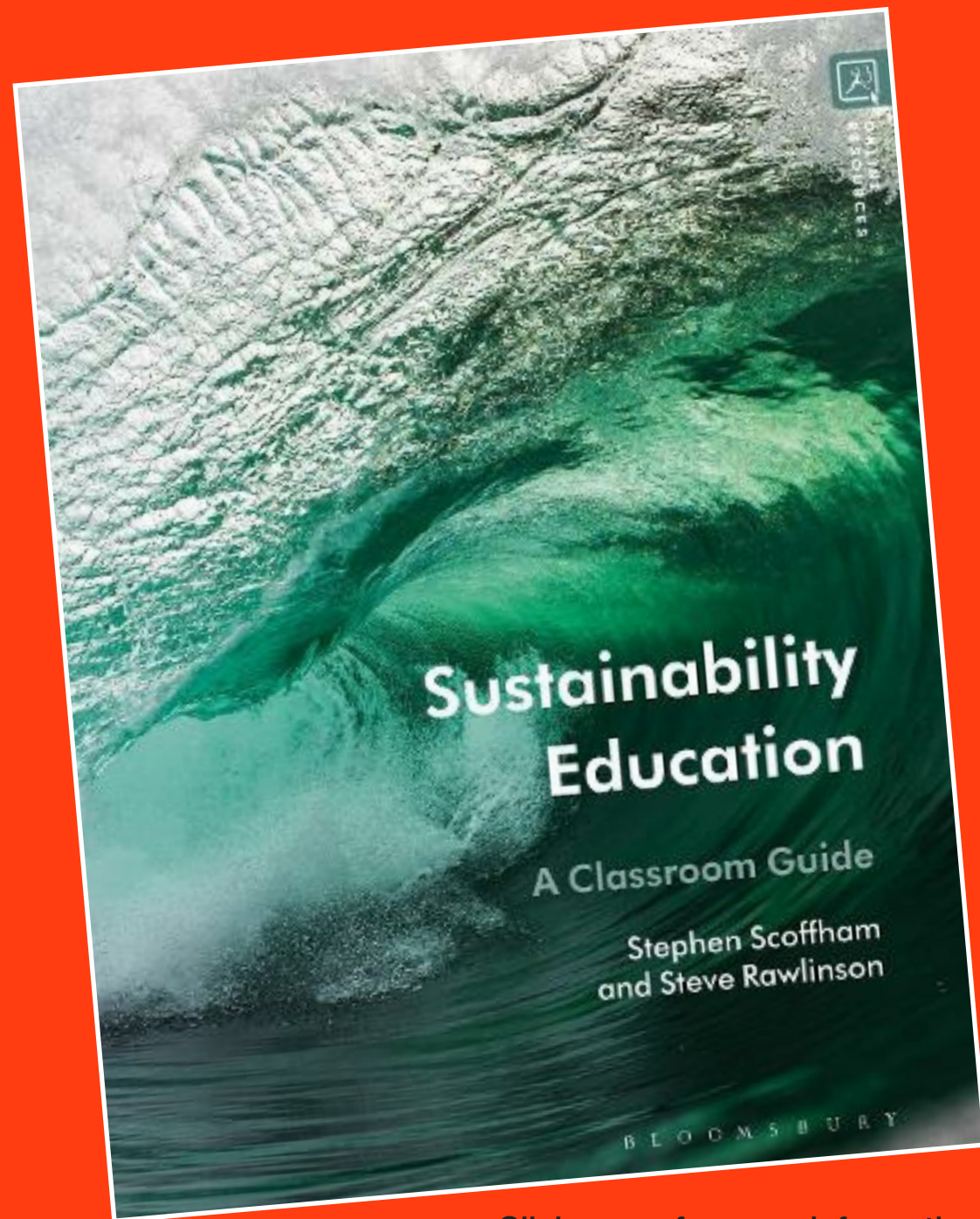


Passionate about sustainability



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“Sustainability education is an emerging and uncertain terrain, as this cover design suggests”

Stephen Scoffham and Steve Rawlinson

reflect on the development of their new book

Let us introduce you to Stevie. Stevie is a young teacher, early in her career. Stevie is passionate about sustainability and wants to offer children the best education she can but lacks experience. Let us also introduce you to Dan. Dan worked as a class teacher for many years, became a Deputy Head and is now a school governor. He is concerned about how the world has changed around him. He has witnessed the decline of wildlife where he lives. He too knows that finding ways to live sustainably is the key challenge that faces us today.

All over the world teachers and school managers are concerned about sustainability but there is precious little guidance on how to re-organise the curriculum in response to the current crisis or how to support young people as they move into a troubled future.

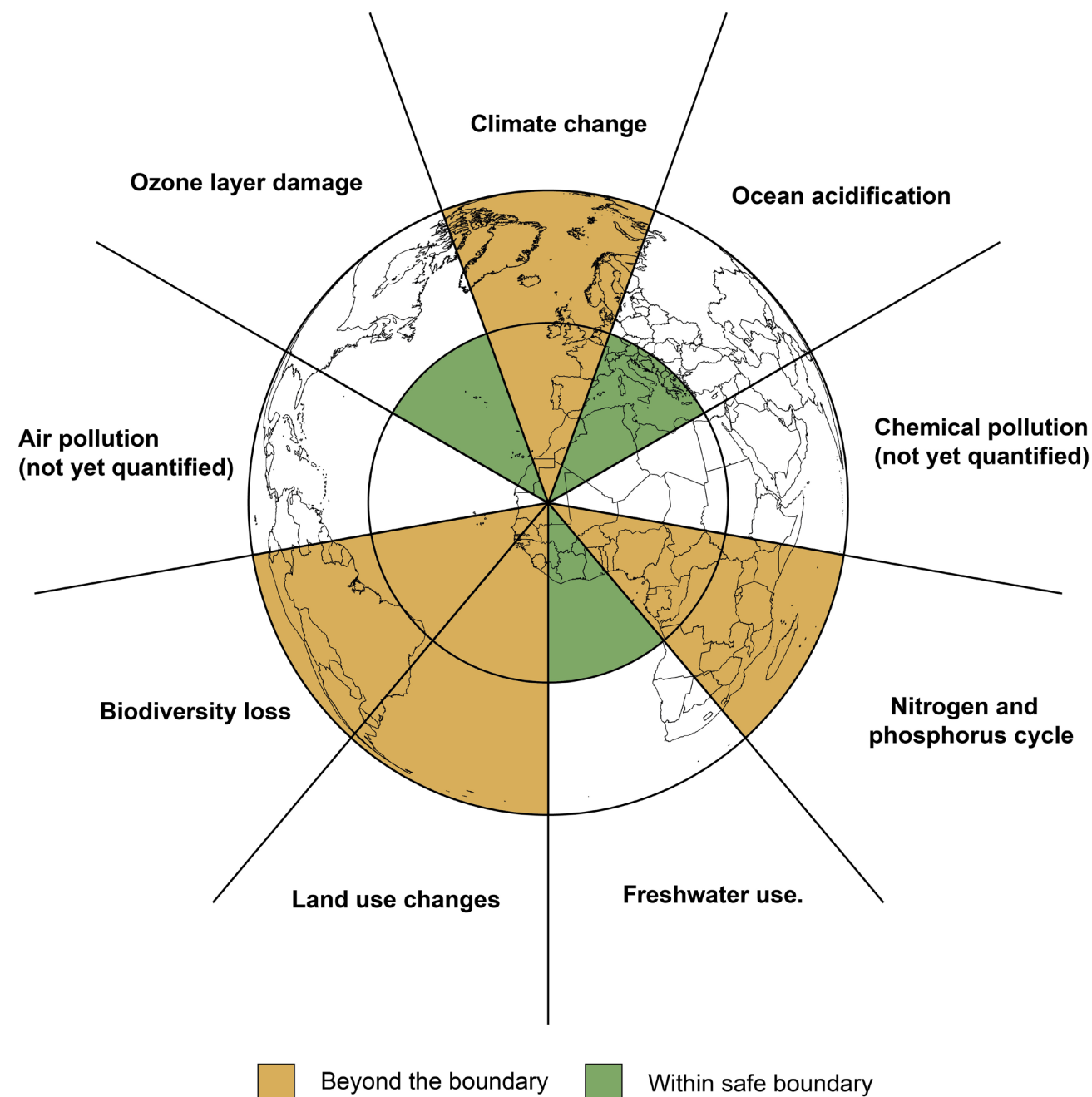
- ❑ What does it mean, for example, for a pupil to be sustainability literate?
- ❑ How does this vary with different age groups?
- ❑ How do subjects as diverse as History, Music, Mathematics and English each make an essential contribution to a curriculum centred on planetary living?
- ❑ What are our responsibilities to ourselves and others both locally and internationally, now and in the future?

Stevie and Dan know that they cannot answer these questions alone. They need advice about how to develop new approaches to teaching and learning. They need to deepen their background knowledge and find out about current developments. They also need their colleagues to work with them, to share approaches and ideas about how to tackle big issues from a subject perspective.

The book, *‘Sustainability Education: A Classroom Guide’* is our response to those needs. It draws on our personal experience of classroom teaching and teacher training. We widened our scope with commissioned contributions from educators in a range of other countries. We also set the latest research and policy initiatives alongside discussion questions and practical teaching activities.



Planetary Boundaries



The book explores core ideas as well as offering practical teaching suggestions. It also has an extensive back up website including many stimulating links.

It took us a while to settle on a title and we struggled to find a suitable cover design. We wanted something different - something both inviting and disturbing. We ended up with the image of a wave breaking on the shore. To us, the way the water curls over at the top of the wave represents the enclosing, nurturing part of sustainability we must all embrace. But the wave also reminds us of the formidable power and destruction of the sea, just one of the awesome forces that nature can unleash. The wave hints at both the importance of change, the energy of young people and the enduring cycles of life. Here was a message that was relevant for both Stevie and Dan.



Sustainability education is a fast-moving field. We have already compiled a list of changes we would make in a second edition.

Of course, writing a book of this kind always involves making compromises. We didn't have nearly enough space, for example, to give detailed lesson guidance or to offer in-depth critiques of current trends. The challenges surrounding active learning required deeper examination as did the needs of children with learning difficulties.



Sharing our ideas with others we have discovered colleagues who are equally passionate about sustainability and doing remarkable things albeit within their own particular 'bubbles'.

Like twinkling diamonds of good practice

Separated by dark voids of inertia

Can we link the 'bubbles' ?

So what do we think we have achieved? Perhaps we can claim to have set out a compelling case for putting sustainability and ESD at the heart of education and making it an integral part of every subject discipline. **This involves making subject boundaries much more porous and rethinking what counts as essential knowledge.**

We have shown how the curriculum can be aligned to international policy initiatives such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs]. And we have highlighted the importance of different ways of knowing and attempted to address the vexed problem of progression.

We know that sustainability is interpreted variously by different educational communities and we do not attempt to advocate a single approach. Quite the contrary ...

Just as in the natural world diversity helps to ensure the resilience of a habitat, so the educational eco-system benefits from a multiplicity of approaches and interpretations. But we tried to dig beneath the surface and highlight some of the over-arching principles, concepts and beliefs which underpin sustainability education.

Sharing our ideas with others we have also discovered colleagues who are equally passionate about sustainability and **doing remarkable things albeit within their own particular 'bubbles'**. We have begun to see a world populated by twinkling diamonds of good practice but separated by dark voids of inertia. How can those diamonds be linked?

We recognise that at the moment there is a radical disconnect between what we know we need to do and what is actually happening in schools. We agree with Stephen Sterling (2022) when he declares

"young people are fervently waiting for us as educators to catch up with them, to empower them and help them make the future".

We want to be part of that process. So do Stevie, Dan and lots of others who we have met. This is something we can all contribute to in different ways. And the time to start doing it is not tomorrow. The time is now.

