

CSEF-5: All conference topics are covered by this initiative

Our Planet

A new, interactive information and education centre for the Caribbean



1. Context

The need to raise awareness in new and innovative ways...

Our Planet will be a new, interactive centre which intends to attract a wide range of visitors and inform them on the need to use natural resources responsibly in order to protect the environment for future generations. *Our Planet* will present current issues in a form which engages young and old alike with an emphasis on visual information through holograms, interactive and motion sensitive light projections. Recent research has proven that visual/graphic information is integrated much more easily into the brain than written data and with greater information “retention” over time. Virtual experiences can generate real understanding and interactive mental challenges can trigger a desire to find real-life solutions. In particular, *Our Planet* will strive to reach out to young people in the Caribbean region in order to encourage them to think about the way they live and motivate positive change.

Our Planet will present the facts on Climate Change but is not a “Climate Change Centre”. *Our Planet* takes the view that whether Climate Change happens or not, we need to change the way we live if we want a better future for our children. If we discovered today that the Climate was stabilising again, we would still have a lot to do.

Our Planet will also provide advisory services to local businesses and individuals who require support evaluating their use and management of energy, water and waste with a view to increasing their efficiency in the use of natural resources.

Our Planet will seek to support local and regional policy initiatives and, as a social environmental enterprise, any income not needed to cover operating costs will be used to fund a wide range of local and regional environmental initiatives. The centre will be self-sustaining and viable after the first two years of operation. *Our Planet* will operate as a social and environmental orientated business. The initial start-up costs will be covered by a mixture of grant funding, sponsorship and commercial loans.

Our Planet expects to be operating from Castries, St Lucia, by the end of the first quarter of 2011.

The choice of St Lucia as a base for *Our Planet* is the result of the following factors which have been taken into consideration:

1. **St Lucia is a small island** and is one of the few islands in the Caribbean with unspoilt rainforest and coral reefs, two environments directly threatened by a changing climate. As the recent **Copenhagen** conference has shown, small islands are becoming increasingly influential in global issues. Tuvalu and the Maldives are examples of the kind of impact small islands can have in a world where an increase in 1.5 degrees in temperature could mean the disappearance of an entire island chain from the maps. Small island power is growing. Setting up *Our Planet* in St Lucia will give a strong voice to small island states and will help to increase tourism to the island. *Our Planet* will raise awareness around the risks for St Lucia and other Caribbean island states of destruction of the habitat through increased extreme weather events such as hurricanes, rising waters, coral bleaching and loss of biodiversity.
2. **St Lucia is a regional hub for energy and environment programmes.** Amongst others the following regional programmes are run out of St Lucia and have agreed to be active partners of *Our Planet*.
 - CARILEC (association of Caribbean electricity utilities)
 - ECERA (Eastern Caribbean Energy Regulatory Authority)
 - CREDP (Caribbean Renewable Energy Development Programme)
 - CEHI (Caribbean Environmental Health Institute)
 - OECS (Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States) Secretariat.
3. **St Lucia benefits from two kinds of “audience”:**
 - a. **Local audience:**

The local audience will include populations from St Lucia and neighbouring islands (particularly Barbados, St Vincent, Martinique and Guadeloupe) which can visit *Our Planet* at concessional rates and which will benefit from the implementation of educational programmes within schools and colleges. The new ferry service planned between some Eastern Caribbean islands will facilitate the implementation of these programmes by *Our Planet*. More regional impact will be attained by the organisation of regional workshops and conferences for sector experts and development organisations.

Our Planet will run awards schemes for schoolchildren and young people to reward efforts to increase recycling protect the environment, etc.

b. **“Global” audience:**

Over 1 million tourists visit St Lucia every year. Around 85% of these visitors are from the USA and around 12% from the UK. This is an opportunity to reach out to these visitors where little information or awareness exists in their home country.

4. **St Lucia’s government wishes to become a leader** in sustainable development in the region and sees *Our Planet* as an invaluable information tool to support their own educational and public information work on this subject.
5. ***Our Planet* will seek to complement, support and highlight activities** carried out by the CCCCC (Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre) which is based in Belize, and other regional and international organisations active in the environment.

2. Our Planet’s activities

A description is given below of the main activities of *Our Planet*.

2.1 Interactive Information/Education Centre

The *Our Planet* Centre will consist of a sequence of spaces/rooms with innovative, highly advanced light projections and interactive displays.

Sustainability will be a key theme through the experience with as many materials as possible being recycled or sustainable. Power for the centre will come from solar energy systems.

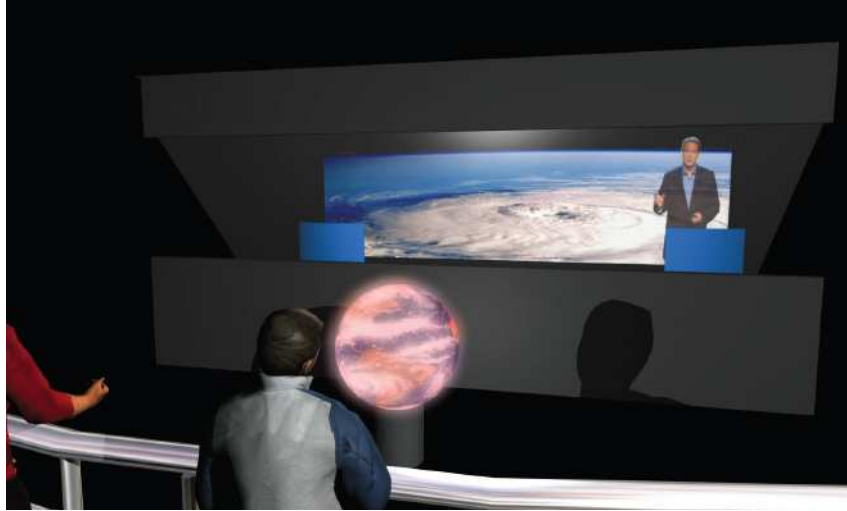
There will be two main sections to the experience:

Space 1: Global context, Climate Change and regional issues

This section will begin by setting the general context. Visitors will be presented with the need to use natural resources wisely and the climate change “debate” will be explained together with the global impacts which could happen within the framework of a changing climate.

The presentation will begin with a spectacular welcome from a “live” hologram of a leading figure in the climate change/environmental sector. The key message here will be that whether climate change exists or not we still need to use natural resources responsibly in order to protect the environment and preserve biodiversity for future generations.

A hologram of a globe will be projected and float in space on which will be played out the various environmental and climatic challenges facing our earth.



Using light projections to create special effects, the visitors will then be “immersed” in the impacts which could occur in the Caribbean region should people fail to use natural resources responsibly.

There will also be interactive walls where Google Climate Change can be called up and any part of the world examined in order to reveal the effects of a changing environment over time. Other displays will present a large, highly realistic, interactive aquarium which will allow visitors to watch a range of marine life and gesture towards a fish or piece of fauna (corals, etc.) thus receiving information on that specific species and how it is affected by environmental change.



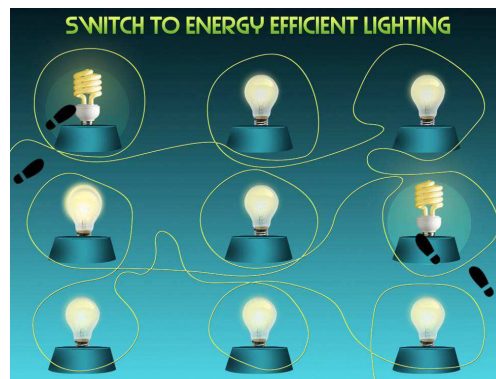
Space 2: Solutions

This space will provide information on solutions to encourage visitors to change behaviour and use natural resources more efficiently.

Interactive floor surfaces will present visitors with “interactive learning games” where for example they can compete to save energy by replacing light bulbs with low consumption bulbs or LEDs (light emitting diodes), learn more about recycling and renewable energies. Visitors will “walk” into the displays and their movements will trigger the changes making these games attractive to a wide range of age groups and abilities. These can be single user or multi user games allowing groups to enjoy learning together.

Examples:

Switch the light sources: visitors are invited to step onto the old light bulbs in order to replace them with more efficient light sources. Replacing more bulbs in the limited time provided will result in less energy consumed and a higher score.



Recycling: one or more players are invited to step on the floor and navigate the items into their appropriate recycling bin. The faster the items are sorted the higher the score achieved.



An interactive screen will enable visitors to assess their carbon footprint and make recommendations to the visitor to reduce their footprint.



Other interactive wall projections will encourage visitors to interact on the issues of renewable energies, protection of biodiversity, etc.

2.2 Information/Advisory Centre

At the exit to the Interactive spaces will be an information and advisory Centre.

Information centre: This will provide factsheets, books and posters on the issues addressed in the Centre, impacts and solutions. Visitors will be able to pick up factsheets recommending easy steps to reduce their carbon footprint and improve their use of natural resources.

Advisory centre: This centre will log enquiries from local individuals and businesses for advice on improving their efficiency and reducing their carbon impact. This advice will range from energy efficiency, renewable energies, water and waste management, recycling, protection of the environment, etc. A pool of local experts will be engaged to carry out visits/audits, recommend, and where required, support the implementation of the solutions.

2.3 Support to local initiatives

Our Planet will generate funding to support a wide range of regional initiatives. This is a major objective of *Our Planet* and this is why the Centre is being set up as a social and environment business, generating funds and building a sustainable model which can be replicated.

2.4 Organisation of Regional Workshops and Conferences and Educational programmes

Our Planet intends to work at a **regional level** and will organise and facilitate international/regional workshops to promote its activities and to raise awareness.

Our Planet will also be working with the government of St Lucia to provide input into local educational programmes and arrange school visits to the Centre.

2. *Our Planet's* funding

Our Planet will need start up financing, principally to cover initial running costs and the cost of infrastructure such as projection equipment, etc. The Founders of *Our Planet* are discussing sponsorship agreements with a number of governments and private sector organisations.

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