

## Perth and Kinross Council: Thinking Globally!

With the United Kingdom having the presidency of the G8 Summit in 2005, and in particular with the event being hosted in Perth and Kinross, Education and Children's Services were tasked with thinking about how we could engage our young people with the summit, and indeed the issues surrounding it, in order to enrich the learning experiences they have.

As an authority we have always been keen to look much further than our own boundaries here in Scotland, and the summit has given us an exciting and motivating context for developing what links we already have Internationally but also to create some new ones.

Our secondary schools were approached to gauge the level of interest in supporting this, and as we expected, there was an overwhelmingly positive response.

We then had to look at the twinning arrangements that already existed within the authority, and build on these. Perhaps most exciting however was the challenge of finding links in countries that we had no existing arrangements with whatsoever. The countries in question were Italy, Japan and the US of A. We used various methods of finding schools, such as the websites called "Windows on the World" and "Global Gateway", of which the latter provided us with positive results for Italy. In the case of the Japanese school we used an organisation called Japan 21, who after filling in a very simple application form, did all the leg work for us and provided a link within a couple of weeks. In the case of the USA, the International Co-ordinator for the authority already had a number of contacts in schools in Maryland therefore the link was made very simple.

As well as these newly formed links we already have existing links with countries in the developing world, which in the case of the summit in 2005 provide a realistic learning context for the issues to be discussed by the world's leaders surrounding the eradication of poverty.

The teachers who are supporting these links for us within schools are mainly coming from the modern studies, geography or language departments, therefore the emphasis is not so much on developing a foreign language with the students, but more in developing their understanding of global issues from various viewpoints, and developing a shared understanding of the responsibility that our young people have within the world at a local level as well as a global level. The links have provided an ideal opportunity for our young people to see the issues that they believe to be important, from a variety of different viewpoints and cultures.

At present all of the schools that the authority has linked with have been communicating in English. Obviously in respects of Canada and the USA we have no major language barriers. In the case of our German, French, Russian

and Italian partners, English features highly within their curriculum, therefore the young people are very fluent in their communication. We also have the support of a language tutor to offer support across the schools. In the Japanese school we have the co-ordination within being carried out by an English Teacher who is there teaching English as a foreign language.

It does have to be said that we are at the very beginning of the communication and the issues being discussed are focussing in on simple topics such as likes, dislikes, what the countries are like etc. It may be that when we move towards discussing the actual issues of climate change and world poverty we will adopt more linguistically inclusive communication strategies, but with the enthusiasm of both our young people and indeed their teachers we look forward to this challenge.