

THE BRITISH-GERMAN ENVIRONMENT FORUM



The central issue of the coming decades is the need to reconcile global economic development with the protection and enhancement of our environment. The task is hugely complex and we are at the beginning of a protracted re-orientation to put our economies on a sustainable development path. We urgently need to discover and spread good practice internationally. In 1998 a conference series was launched which aims to help meet that need – the **British-German Environment Forum (BGEF)**.

The Forum was inspired by the successful tradition of Anglo-German ‘Königswinter’ conferences, which have made a unique contribution to political understanding and cooperation between Germany and Britain since the war. It represents an extension of the tradition within a narrower focus: it acts as a catalyst for new thinking and action on the challenge of environmentally sustainable development. The UK and Germany, both among the first countries to industrialize, not only face special challenges in moving towards sustainability but have valuable – and contrasting - policy experience and traditions to share and build upon, not only for mutual benefit but also to inspire good practice throughout Europe and globally. BGEF brings together policy makers and practitioners from business, public agencies and the voluntary sector for a 2-day conference, alternating every year between Britain and Germany. It is building a network of contacts to promote good practice and innovation. BGEF is designed to generate *action*: a key goal is to develop the experience and insights of *practitioners* in business, local government and the voluntary sectors involved in designing and implementing initiatives at local and regional levels as well as the national level. The conference series reflects the acknowledgement by the UK and German governments of the centrality of sustainable development and of the potential for each country to learn from the other in this area.

The initiative is supported by the Anglo-German Foundation (AGF), and further funding for the conference series comes from appropriate public and private sector sponsors. Selection of delegates, themes and venues is the responsibility of a Joint Steering Committee comprising distinguished members drawn in equal numbers from the UK and Germany representing organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors. The Committee is jointly chaired by *Tom Burke*, Rio Tinto’s environmental strategy adviser and former Special Adviser to the UK Secretary of State for the Environment, and by *Jo Leinen MEP*, former Minister for the Environment for the Saarland.

The full committee currently comprises:

United Kingdom:

Tom Burke (Joint Chair)

Dr Michael Grubb
Head, Energy and Environment, RIIA

Derek Osborn
Chair, UNED-UK

Sara Parkin
Director, Forum for the Future

Robert M. Worcester
Chair, MORI

Germany:

Jo Leinen (Joint Chair)

Dr Hermann Ott
Wuppertal Institute

Prof. Dr. Fritz Vahrenholt
*Chair, REpower Systems AG,
Chair, Forum für Zukunftsenergien*

Dr Fritz Vorholz
Economics correspondent, Die Zeit

Dr Angelika Zahrt
Chair, BUND

Initiators and co-ordinators of BGEF are:

- Ian Christie, *Surrey County Council*
- Ray Cunningham, *Anglo-German Foundation*
- R. Andreas Kraemer, *Ecologic*

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