

Qatar to lay stress on environment protection

By Bonnie James

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In order to make the environmental movement more visible and influential in Qatar, the government plans to appoint a respected national figure to serve as a champion for the cause.

Residents are to be enlisted in supporting and sustaining improved environmental management, according to Qatar National Development Strategy (NDS) 2011-2016.

The campaign to protect Qatar's environmental endowment can draw on foundational values embedded in the country's religious and cultural heritage, it is pointed out.

The notion of protecting the environment for the benefit of future

generations has broad appeal. Demonstration projects can also have an impact.

A far-reaching schools and environment programme can build on the United Nations Children's Fund Ecoschools proposal, with links to local initiatives underway at the Qatar Green Centre and the Friends of Environment Centre.

Specific industries, such as office management and communications, will be encouraged to demonstrate the benefits of green design and practice.

New construction projects - such as the New Doha International Airport - could also showcase design features for green buildings.

The NDS document has stated that successful environmental management will require active engagement

through society. Large commercial corporations and policymakers have important roles to play. And so does every individual.

There has been increased reliance on the automobile as well as high electricity and water consumption, including frequent car washing and lawn sprinkling using the country's scarce desalinated water.

The NDS says air-conditioning accounts for two-thirds of the electricity used for residential purposes. Moreover, Doha's skyscrapers are often continuously air-conditioned and fully lit.

The present patterns of growth and consumption need to be better managed in order to secure health and prosperity for future generations.

There is also evidence that a

deeper environmental awareness is growing. For example, schools have added environmental studies programmes to the curriculum.

Civil society organisations focused on the environment - including the Qatar Green Centre, the Friends of the Environment Centre, the Barwa Qatari Diar Green Buildings Institute, the Qatar Natural History Group and the Qatar Bird Club - are building membership and support.

Although these groups do not yet have the clout of similar non-governmental organisations in countries where the environmental movement is further established, they show that Qatar harbours an environmental consciousness that can be strengthened and expanded, the NDS says.