

Thu 11/06/2020 13:50

Dear Colleagues,

I hope that you are keeping safe and well. Like me you will be watching the news to see what is happening with the lockdown and the gradual easing of restrictions. The debate about 1m as opposed to 2m physical distancing is alive and well and we will be watching this closely. If it changes, it will make a significant difference to our capacity and our Covid Secure plans. You will also be watching the various plans (or lack of them) for schools reopening. We will continue to follow these closely and are continuing our discussions with Local Education Authorities and Multi Academy Trusts to see where we can help. You may also have seen the appalling images of the arrest and death of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the subsequent worldwide marches. Leaving aside the debate about the difficulty of maintaining social distancing, I think the FSC position is pretty succinctly contained in our values, we believe in 'opportunities for everyone' and will redouble our efforts to achieve this aspiration in everything that we do.

I know that there have been concerns about the furlough scheme and implications for annual leave. The HR staff and Heads of Group have been working flat out to try to help those with concerns and will continue to do their best to accommodate your requests. Last week we made the difficult decision to terminate the employment of some of those staff previously laid off. We did so where we felt that it was highly unlikely that their services would be required before the autumn. This was not an easy decision to make but we felt that, though deeply regrettable, it was the correct decision to take at this time. Each member of staff affected has been contacted and assured that we would be very keen to work with them again once the situation is more favourable.

We have submitted a draft plan to the Finance and Administration (F&A) committee to consider on Tuesday next week. It contains proposals that would enable us to continue to operate into academic year 2022 and beyond, based on how we think the Covid 19 situation might develop and impact schools and universities through to autumn 2021. If the F&A is satisfied with the recommendations it will go to the full board of trustees on 2 July.

HEPs

Having assessed the situation with schools not returning until September at the earliest, combined with FSC staff still using the Government's Job Retention Furlough Scheme, we have decided to adjust the FSC Higher Education Placement Scheme for the next academic year. We have written to all HEP's offering them a potential deferral to a November start with a 9 month placement although we will have to evaluate whether we can offer this later in the year.

Admin Teams

The Admin Teams continue to work hard to attract new business and reassure existing customers. Getting to grips with the requirements of booking.com to attract visitors this summer has been a particular challenge of late. On the Education side, they continue to deal with a large volume of activity. Finding a suitable resolution for those customers with complaints or frustrations has also been particularly difficult, as I'm sure you can all imagine, and I'd like to thank them for their continued efforts.

Training

Last month we shared some free training opportunities that you may be interested in. There is a varied list of courses on the staff news page that we hope will appeal to lots of you. We have recently added some more suggestions and we are keen to hear from anyone that has undertaken

these courses and receive your feedback about any you would recommend to others. The new FSC Virtual Learning Project has been a good opportunity to look at how we deliver internal training. We are looking to deliver the Covid Secure training on this new online system. Further information and details will be sent next week.

FSC Digital

Building on the success of Field Work live we are now looking at how digital fieldwork is going to look this autumn and in the future. We have been approached to do some work now for the Oak National Academy which is great kudos for FSC. We are also designing digital fieldwork for Cardiff University for their undergraduates this autumn.

Bio Links

FSC Virtual Meetups programme continues with upcoming talks on ladybird larvae, the rugged oil beetle, water vole reintroduction and dormice. FSC staff are welcome/encouraged to attend these free events for training/interest and it would be great to have some talks from FSC staff <https://www.fscbiodiversity.uk/VirtualMeetups>

Publications

Thanks to some help from Mary at HO, FSC Publications has trialled some Facebook advertising, which along with Twitter, has helped achieve record web sales last week with over 300 web orders! Many of these were new customers, helping to extend the FSC reach even though people can't presently visit our Centres. Through-out the Covid-19 lockdown people seem to be making the most of their gardens and local spaces, with sales of our *Garden Safari* and *Garden Wildlife* proving particularly popular. Don't forget to help us by sharing your wildlife pictures on #fscfinds.

Mental Health and Staff Wellbeing

Your wellbeing at work is extremely important to us. Creating a positive, healthy environment in which to work is key to productivity, as well as happiness. Together with award winning workplace wellbeing provider, [Health Assured](#), FSC are able to provide staff with help and support. Please don't forget to utilise the suite of products and services to support your mental health and wellbeing during these challenging times - providing you with a structured way to work through physical or mental health issues and any financial difficulty you may be currently facing.

(Please note: Username: **Zurich** Password: **Assurance**)

At a staff talk a couple of weeks ago Andy Pratt challenged staff to complete health & wellbeing training – Making Every Contact Count (MECC) training to see if we could get 50% to complete the online course within 2 weeks. You have done well but for those of you who have not completed it yet, details are on the staff intranet webpage <https://staffnews.field-studies-council.org/training-opportunities-give-your-brain-a-workout/> with endorsements from staff who have completed it <https://staffnews.field-studies-council.org/talking-about-training/>.

[WEBINAR] COVID-19: Managing return to work anxiety

For those staff who may be returning back to work after time off can be an emotional transition. This [webinar](#) provided by Health Assured is one of many different webinars that looks into the

importance of preparing for change and how to cope with back to work anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition please don't forget to keep an eye on the [staff news](#) pages for useful guides, tips and information.

Media Coverage

- <https://www.schooltravelorganiser.com/news-and-ideas/hardship-fund-should-be-available-for-schools-that-have-had-trips-cancelled/8677.article>
- <https://www.schooltravelorganiser.com/news-and-ideas/consortium-supports-schools-to-re-open-by-taking-learning-outdoors/8667.article>

All Staff Zoom

We will arrange a zoom question and answer session for Thursday 18 June. Full details to follow by SMS, questions can either be submitted to Susan at s.appleyard@field-studies-council.org in advance or on the day through the chat facility.

Best regards and stay safe

Mark