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Dear Colleagues,

The start of vaccinations is welcome news, but it's really important not to let our guard down. I prefer rugby to cricket, but the cancellation of England's cricket tour to South Africa shows just how easily bio-secure bubbles can be breached. It only takes one careless person to bring down an entire carefully planned event and financial disaster with it. There's more about the importance of maintaining customer confidence below. In the meantime, while we all wait patiently or otherwise for our jabs, don't forget to take up the offer of the 'flu vaccine if you can. Details are [here](#).

Education infographic

Last week saw Jennie's infographic to show our supporters what we have managed to achieve despite being unable to deliver core parts of our business for much of the year. This week I am attaching one that focusses on the achievements of our education offers. The numbers are impressive and paint a picture of a flexible organisation able to adapt and change at scale and at speed, pulling in multi-disciplinary teams and individuals from across FSC to make it happen. It is worth noting that yesterday Fieldwork Live passed the 100,000 views since the event itself.

Confident in being Covid Secure

All of these education achievements are important, but I want to particularly highlight the day visitors that we have welcomed. The figure includes those that came before lockdown, but we have managed to build day business up again. Being able to successfully deliver Covid-Secure courses, knowing our way around the guidelines, implementing the practicalities, ensuring that everyone has done the training and building on what we learned during 'Stay with Us' has put FSC in a better place than some of our competitors. Confidence in FSC's ability and a track record in keeping people safe is more important than ever as we work hard to get schools and parents to part with their hard earned money and pay deposits as we roll out our Residential Ready campaign.

Brexit

I am sure that many of you have been following the 'deal or no deal' speculation including whether Boris' fish menu last night was an EU symbolic gesture! Regardless of the outcome, the geographers amongst you will know that the British Isles will continue to include an EU member in the Republic of Ireland and that we are pretty close to the European mainland. It is on that basis that we have had BREXIT on our strategic risk register for some time. We will of course watch carefully for any impacts on our climate and sustainability agenda of divergence or reductions in environmental standards. In many respects our 'exposure' to the BREXIT changes is assumed to be manageable; we may even see an increase in the domestic fieldwork market. For our staff who are EU nationals we value the contribution you make and we will do all that we can to work with you to overcome any difficulties or concerns you may have. We will be looking very carefully at the risks and opportunities once the dust has settled in January.

Key messages for the new term

The roadmap is in place and it is very unlikely that residential visits will be allowed any earlier than Easter. Given the importance of confidence in FSC's ability to deliver and assure customers that we will still be here to do so, we are looking at making sure that our key external messages and campaigning focus are on the positives: getting ready for residential visits to resume after Easter and highlighting all that we can offer our customers in the meantime. We will continue to position ourselves as the organisation that can help learners catch up and help teachers cover the curriculum content. We know that some parts of the sector are in a tough place but we do not want this to undermine customer and business confidence in the FSC.

Access Unlimited Partnership

I mentioned the Access Unlimited Partnership last week and the award of a c.£2.5 million Green Recovery Challenge Fund grant to our coalition. The £2,543,602 grant has been awarded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) to the Access Unlimited coalition which is made up of YHA (England & Wales), The Outward Bound Trust, Scouts, Girlguiding, Field Studies Council and the 10 English National Parks. I have attached today's 'Generation Green' press release for those interested in the detail.

CPD Training Courses

Bookings go live this week for a suite of teacher CPD courses that can either act as a stand-alone session or a follow up from previous courses. Teachers can sign up to the 90 minute webinar sessions either separately or as a whole course. They are available once a week through mid-Jan to Feb between 4pm and 5.30pm. The courses cover both biology and geography including a new teachers' toolkit to deliver fieldwork, fieldwork skills and opportunities in your local area, maths, stats, GIS, NEA preparation and ecology practicals.

Update from the FSC Future Group

The majority of consultations have now been concluded and the paperwork is being sent out. We have recruited several people to new roles internally but there are a number of positions that need filling which are out for internal as well as external recruitment at the moment. Do [take a look at the opportunities](#) available.

Last Orders for Christmas

If you have not already got your entire Christmas presents list sorted by buying FSC goodies there is still time to buy your gift packs, butterfly bags and notebooks. The publications elves will be taking orders to end of Sunday 20th December for despatch before Christmas.

Special Mentions

I want to pay tribute to the ways in which so many of you have supported each other this year. One of the positives to come out of the pandemic is the way in which staff enthusiastically took the opportunity to move out of their silos and -often unprompted- made themselves available for a chat, set up inclusive informal networks, slack channels, zoom events, online coffee mornings and WhatsApp groups to help keep in touch with colleagues. Some groups have developed a social life of their own, others have provided us all with essential laugh out loud moments. These stronger relationships and the way in which we have all worked together will stand us in good stead for next year.

I would also like to recognise the work of Joy Blizzard for her work on policy and communications and the excellent work of the marketing team. Very much the unseen voices of FSC and doing lots of brilliant work ensuring we stay at the front of the minds of decision makers, teachers and our future customers as we slowly start to emerge from the restrictions of Covid.

Guest Editor

Next week our Chairman Professor Pete Higgins will be producing the weekly Catch Up so I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support through this difficult year and wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Keep safe and stay well

Mark