

Thu 28/01/2021 12:25

Dear Colleagues,

The headlines that we had reached the 100,000 attributable Covid deaths milestone this week made grim news indeed. My thoughts, and I am sure yours are with all those who have lost loved ones during this awful pandemic. It has been a long slog and although the 8 March review point may provide a glimmer of hope I suspect we will need to keep leaning into the wind for a bit yet. It is great news that the vaccination roll out is going well and it would be fantastic if we could welcome visitors back around Easter.

Departure of Simon Ward

I am sure that many of you will know Simon Ward personally. He has been the Head of the Eastern Group since it was formed and has led on numerous new initiatives that many of you have been part of. Simon has been offered the exciting opportunity to take on the role of Chief Executive Officer with the Royal Entomological Society. Simon will be leaving FSC in mid-April and in the meantime will be ensuring that all areas for which he is responsible will be handed over in the most effective way. Whilst Simon is delighted to be leading the RES in its next chapter, he tells me that he will be sad to leave FSC after so many years and remains very proud to have been part of the friendly and committed team at FSC. I am sure you will join me in wishing him well for the future.

#Primarynaturelive goes live next week

FSC's imaginative programme to connect locked down primary learners with nature could not have come at a better time for them, their teachers and parents. Less than 48 hours since the launch we have over 600 sign ups. The first session will be What to do on a Walk, followed by Brilliant Birds, A Peep at Ponds and Wild Skills, Shelter and Traps. There is more on the website [here](#). Teams from across FSC have been involved in pulling this project together. Thanks for all your hard work and enthusiasm.

Customers can sign up [here](#) and the sessions will be broadcast on the [FSC YouTube Channel](#). If anyone signs up they get a free pack of resources and a free bird ID guide. I want to encourage all staff and trustees to push the message of #PrimaryNature Live through social media or local schools. We even have Lou presenting a short [promo video](#) complete with an animated tortoise ready to go live today too



Government Funding and Support

With lots of financial support being announced from the Treasury, government have made it sound easy to access help. I'm not surprised therefore that staff often ask what FSC is doing to access this support. The answer is that many people are involved in chasing down all

possibilities including our Grants Officer Jennie and staff from the finance and infrastructure teams. The difficulty is our old friend the small print and that FSC can fall between two stools i.e. we were not ordered to close by the government, but the guidelines none the less makes it impossible to carry out our normal business. This is something we are pursuing with government but in the meantime, we have applied for support from the government's local business support funds where FSC has a physical presence. Sometimes support is given through rates relief because of FSC's charitable status and this obviously gives FSC a valuable saving every year, not just during a global pandemic. Local authorities and devolved nations are applying the grant support in different ways, so we wait to hear how each application fares. Be reassured we are doing all we can to access what might be available.

Funding Success for Millport

Following the train of thought in the previous paragraph, successful application to the Education Recovery Fund has provided £41,000 to deliver outreach work to children most affected by the lockdown. Work has already started with some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged and is being led by Christina Sinclair and supported by HEPs Ada, Jess and Emma. A further successful application to the Scottish Outdoor Education Recovery Fund has provided a welcome £61,000 to help towards overhead costs.

My Healthy Advantage Mobile Phone App

Health Advantage has a new app from FSC's health provider Zurich which I want to bring to your attention. It has a range of features and tools to boost both mental and physical health with personalised plans and trackers to help set and work towards goals. More information on the app and instructions on how to download it are on the staff website [here](#).

Staff Reps

The current staff reps on the Board and sub-committees have been in place since 2019. As a couple of them have recently left, we thought that now would be a good time to review the guidelines before electing some new reps. We plan to introduce some changes, including a fixed two-year term and to elect two reps for the Board and each sub-committee, instead of one rep and one reserve. One rep will attend each meeting, but the two reps can decide between themselves who attends which meeting. An email with further details will be sent out to all staff early next week to advertise these vacancies, with a view to having new reps in place by the beginning of March. In the meantime, we would like to thank our existing reps - John Blair, Jo Harris, Zoe Langford, Nick Laphorn, Kay Oxley and Helen Robertson – for their time and effort over the past 18 months or more.

HEP Update

HEPs are doing a great job engaging with various teams across FSC and supporting their work. They have been ably supported by Jenny Pearson at Millport on a day to day basis although three have now moved out to their permanent centres. It remains the plan that all HEPs will go where business requires them as soon as the opportunities open up again.

Keep safe and stay well
Mark