

Thu 04/02/2021 12:20

Dear Colleagues,

I was out clapping for the late Captain Sir Tom and the NHS at 6pm yesterday and was joined by many of my neighbours clapping and rattling pots and pans. It was a moment not only to reflect on the tremendous achievements of 'Captain Tom' and our key workers but also the stoicism of the vast majority of the population through these very trying times. It has been a long haul, but it is great to see the vaccination numbers increasing, so at least the end may be in sight. There is much talk of those who have tried to motivate during lockdown, mainly fitness gurus it seems but our very own team have been doing great work to inspire and educate young people through Fieldwork Live and now Primary Nature Live. If you haven't made your own bird feeder yet, tune into the 'brilliant birds' link below. The Finance and Administration committee met yesterday, and we were able to share our thoughts on the impact of this latest lockdown on our predictions and assumptions for 2021.22. The trustees expressed their satisfaction with the analysis, and we will take this to the next Board meeting in March. We are constantly reviewing the changes to guidance either through the Covid OPT or SLT to ensure that we really understand the risks and opportunities that they may represent for us.

### **#primarynaturelive**

I'm really pleased that #primarynaturelive got a lot of media coverage in advance of our first session on Tuesday. Here is just a sample of the [kind of coverage](#) that FSC generated in specialist education titles but also in many of the local papers in Shropshire and Suffolk too. There was also a chance for a good lengthy discussion about the new lessons, the benefits of outdoor learning and an opportunity to identify a beetle in a Radio Shropshire interview with Simon Ward which you can find [here](#) at 1:40 in. "[What to do on a walk](#)" has so far been viewed by over 4,600 people and today's "[Brilliant Birds](#)" had 776 when I was watching and will, I am sure, clock up many more on catch up. Please do keep sharing with any school or family contacts in need of some inspiration. Coinciding as #primarynaturelive does with Children's Mental Health Week and a growing recognition - even from the PM himself - that teaching in lockdown in the winter is tough for so many, the feedback so far is that this is a really welcome initiative. The teacher CPD sessions have been running this week also and now have over 200 bookings.

### **Getting Ready for Catch Up**

Yesterday the government announced that a new [Catch Up Commissioner](#) to head up the programme has been appointed. Officially known as the Education Recovery Commissioner, Sir Kevan Collins has a long track record in education and was recently CEO of the Education Endowment Foundation. A £1 billion Covid Catch Up fund was announced last year and since then an additional £300 million has been allocated to tutoring programmes. Of particular interest to FSC as we get ready with our catch up offers are the "potential plans for summer schools developed in partnership with the education sector". What we really need now are the details.

### **Preparing for Reopening of Residential**

The slightly awkwardly titled DfE School Travel Sector Stakeholder Group (STSSG) has been tasked with setting out the roadmap to residential reopening. Initially the target was to be "residential ready" by Easter. A Covid Safe Charter is under development and this, along with Covid Secure Policy and Procedures that cover operational details is due to be shared with a Public Health England (PHE) at a meeting today. At the time of writing, FSC's Covid -OPT have not had sight of these documents so we do not know how closely aligned they are with our own that were so carefully and thoroughly put together over the last few months. The STSSG are also working hard with government on boosting booking confidence and financial support for the sector. Gaining the confidence of PHE will be crucial in being able to move forward. It was PHE's rather broad brush assumptions about the


nature of the accommodation that can be offered by the outdoor sector at the start of the pandemic was not helpful but influential and it tended to be repeated elsewhere without being challenged. The advice on residencies has not changed yet in Wales or Scotland either, but generally this is one area where the guidance tends to be consistent, if not identical, across the UK.

### **Ongoing Political work**

Our work with local MPs and the members of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) continues as we turn our attention to what we can offer learners and teachers, but how our ability to move at scale and pace as the situation demands will be hampered by huge debt. I have written to all our centre MPs again this week with specific asks on speeding up the DfE's work on reopening, pushing insurance companies to pay out on business interruption policies and making the government's CBILS loans interest free. FSC also produced a short one pager for politicians on the Ten Barriers that are preventing us from playing a full role in education recovery including the regulations, assumptions and the debt burden. This included highlighting that we are one of the very few sectors to remain under a total ban regardless of the tiers or local conditions that allowed other similar sectors (hotels, pubs, theatres and campsites) to at least partially reopen under strict covid secure guidelines.

Mindful that we do not want to do anything that knocks customer confidence when they book with us and further undermine our cash flow, FSC is careful to always make our calls for financial support in the political realm in terms of it enabling us to fully play our role as a charity post covid. Our marketing focus continues to be that FSC is here to help support both learners and teachers.

### **Who's Who in FSC**

After a number of changes to the organisation, the current staff structures now with names as well as job titles have been uploaded. This will of course be a changing document with new appointments to be made but the up to date version and can be found in the  [Intranet Document](#) Archive/ FSC Collective Consultation Information 2020/Final Structures.

Keep safe and stay well

Mark