

Thu 18/02/2021 13:23

Dear Colleagues,

I know that many are on leave this week with some taking a well-earned break from the endless juggling of work and schooling responsibilities. We are gearing up for next week's announcements on the possible re-opening of our society. The schools' date has been well trailed, but for us much hangs on whether or not we get any updated guidance on school residentials across the UK and whether the original target date of being residential ready by Easter has slipped. The reopening of hospitality and lifting of travel restrictions will also impact on our plans for Stay with Us. In that mix of government announcements we are hoping to hear more on the plans for the national education catch up. The Covid-19 operational team is on standby to wade through all the implications and our marketing team is poised ready with both holiday and education offers as soon as we get some sort of certainty.

### **Interim Changes**

Following the announcement of Simon Ward's departure in April the SLT have been working to ensure that there is a smooth transition and handover of responsibilities. As a result, a number of interim measures will be put in place over the coming weeks. I want to stress that these are interim measures and that I want to keep upheaval to a minimum. We will of course keep them under review as a better picture emerges of what our post Covid business will look like.

#### **Education**

The education brief will pass to Ian Wainwright. As the lead on account management, Ian will ensure that a number of staff take on the partnership work that Simon has been involved with around education. In addition, we are looking to put an Education Development Lead in place that will also work with Awarding Organisations and continue the great work that the Education Development Team have started since December. More details will follow on this shortly.

#### **Operational Health and Safety**

Tim Foster will be taking on the lead for Operational Health and Safety. He will be working closely with Helen Robertson and Julie Bowen who have been doing fantastic work in this area both during the pandemic but also in preparation for the recovery.

#### **East Region**

For the interim period, Centres will generally see little change as their operational management will still be overseen by the Group Operations Managers. However, Simon's role of Head of Group East will now be split between Tim Foster (North) and Andy Pratt (South). Rhyd-y-creuau and Preston Montford will join the North region with Alex MacFie as their Group Operations Manager. Other than this, the regions will remain in the same structure.

### **Opportunity for furloughed staff to help out the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom**

Simon Ward is a trustee of the CLOtC, who have had to furlough a number of staff from their very small team. There are some areas where they could really do with some support including:

- Fundraising
- Sponsorship
- LOtC Curriculum Development and CPD for teachers

- Website content and technical side

If there are any FSC staff that would like to be involved and use some of your furlough time to volunteer to support CLOtC please contact Simon. Volunteering in this way is a great opportunity to keep your skills sharp and develop some new ones. FSC has itself benefited from volunteers who helped us develop our Stay with Us offer, so we are happy to extend the same benefits to other organisations.

### **Things other than Covid-19**

Covid-19 has understandably taken up all the political oxygen across the UK, but this month has seen some of the threads of pre-covid policy being picked up again and some movement on issues that we have been waiting on for some time.

[Qualifications Wales is consulting](#) on changes to GCSEs as part of the huge task of lining them up with the new Welsh Curriculum. The proposals include shoehorning geography into a Humanities GCSE and offering only a double science award rather than having biology, chemistry and physics. Our concern is that core content from these subjects will be lost and that - as we saw with the changes to the summer exam series- fieldwork trips and practical outdoor science are easy victims when it comes to reducing content and timetable pressures. Our alarm bells rang when natural history, climate change and environmental science were given as examples of subjects that could be offered as part of a suite of “supplementary qualifications” instead. FSC is responding, working with the Royal Society of Biology to align our arguments and we are talking with colleagues at the Royal Geographical Society. It’s early days and the consultation documents themselves admit that the humanities GCSE suggestion is challenging and so they are initially just testing the feasibility. The possible marginalisation of core science and societal issues seems at odds with the aims of the curriculum and the bigger Welsh policy framework which has climate change and the health of the natural environment at its heart. FSC will be pointing that out.

[The Glover Review](#) of English Landscapes was published in 2019 with a number of areas of interest and overlap for FSC. We have been waiting for a government response ever since. This month DEFRA’s Nature and People team are seeking FSC’s insight to inform their work on supporting inclusive access to national parks and AONBs. These access issues are very ably set out in Chapter 2 of the review and it’s well worth a read. It also chimes with last week’s catch up where I shared the details of IOL’s seminars on equality and diversity. We are sharing with DEFRA both our experiences and details of a number of projects that have specifically aimed at increasing access to nature for groups that are often underrepresented or overlooked.

[The UK’s International Education Strategy](#) was launched in 2019, again it has been significantly impacted by Covid, but an update has been published this week and we will be looking at it in detail. There is growing international demand for what UK education can offer. I’d be interested to know whether any staff or trustees know the International Education Champion Professor Sir Steve Smith. There’s a picture on page 4 if that helps.

If these green shoots of policy making continue, we might see the return of Joy’s wry Monthly Policy Reports. Brace yourselves.

Stay safe and keep well

Mark