

Thu 25/03/2021 13:33

Dear Colleagues,

It was really good to see so many of you on [yesterday's zoom](#) and I hope that you feel better informed about our direction of travel. For those of you that missed it, this and all the recordings of previous meetings including Tuesday's all staff zoom can be found [here](#). If you missed the Tuesday Zoom, Lizzie gave an update on apprenticeships and Bek on publications. Gary reiterated his plea for those that haven't yet responded to digital about sorting out their new antivirus upgrade to please get in contact via digital@ so that Owain and Phil can keep us all safe. I noticed that the transcript describes the meeting as an "all stuff zoo" which reminds me that we have not forgotten about exploring better live captioning for those that would appreciate it. It has just been a little delayed by flexi furlough.

### **Guidance Review**

Despite regular assurances that we would know more from the DfE about their review into the school visit guidance last week, and then this week, at the time of writing nothing has been forthcoming. Frankly, it's really very poor. On Tuesday, schools' minister Nick Gibb only responded to a direct question in general terms of working to allow school visits in line with the roadmap but took no opportunity to say something positive about an announcement being imminent. Even being assured that we can indeed reopen in line with the roadmap would be welcome, but that is not a given with the blanket ban in place and sadly highlights some very muddled thinking and misconceptions amongst these decision makers. We will continue to do all we can to influence their thinking.

So frustrated is one independent centre in Norfolk by the lack of progress, that it is launching a judicial review against the DfE and Gavin Williamson. I'm sure many of us are tempted to launch something else at the DfE. The story was picked up on ITV news and Simon Ward managed to get FSC involved with a piece from Flatford Mill which was looking particularly spring like and inviting. This only helped underline just what so many are missing out on and the story and the press work around the judicial review has put a very welcome focus on disadvantaged learners. You can see the clip [here](#).

### **65% Reduction in FSC Carbon Emissions**

In yesterday's meeting I spoke of climate change and biodiversity loss as the challenges that still await us post Covid, so I'm glad to report some good news beyond the immediate issue of the DfE. This weekend we reported to Trustees that FSC achieved over 65% reduction in carbon emissions by 2020 - much better than the 40% target we set ourselves in 2011. The finance team are still working on the data for 2019, but in 2018 the reduction was 35%, so we may have achieved the target a year early. This does not include the switch to Green Electricity in 2018 and Green Gas in 2020 so our achievement could be even better.

The Environment and Sustainability Working Group are beginning to start work on the 2021-2030 Carbon and Nature Recovery plan with the target to become Carbon Net-Zero. This might need new ideas like the carbon vision dashboard to better manage our energy in real time and carbon storage in our woodland, and we will definitely need your support and a contribution from everyone. This kind of work requires a lot of detailed data crunching so thank you to Chris Price, Andy Jones, Emma Trevett and Linda Jackson for their help with the Carbon Trust data collection and for Anne Beeston and Mihaela Nistor for picking up additional accounting queries and work while this was happening.

### **Travel and Carbon Reduction**

We all know 2020 emissions were significantly affected by Covid-19 and the lack of visitors but there has also been a big reduction in travel and increased use of Zoom. It is hugely important that we manage the bounce back from 2020 as we re-open our centres in 2021. One of the first ways to get involved is through transport and carbon reduction so we are asking everyone to minimise the use of vehicles and adopt the strategy that is being implemented by OCT this week. You will be hearing more from managers about this in the coming weeks.

### **OCR update on a Natural history GCSE**

We are still waiting for a response from DfE about taking forward a [GCSE in Natural History](#) but OCR (Oxford Cambridge RSA exam board) do a good regular update to which you can sign up at the bottom of the webpage. The latest has a focus on connecting children to nature with an article on [Nature – back on the table](#).

### **Special Mention**

This week it's Dan and Aaron from the FSC BioLinks team. Dan and Aaron joined the FSC in January and have really hit the ground running. Dan is already half way through teaching a new online course for adults 'Discovering Beetles' and Aaron's 'Discovering Bees' students begin their learning journey with the FSC next week. These exciting new online courses look fantastic, with Dan and Aaron using their invertebrate expertise to create interactive learning experiences that the FSC is proud to add to its range of virtual training products.

### **Paul Alston**

We will shortly say farewell to Paul who joined FSC in dramatic times. In at the deep end, Paul dealt with some of the flood issues of spring 2020 just before things became even more dramatic with the pandemic. He has been instrumental in dealing with all sorts of infrastructure projects including keeping our centres safe during lockdown, making them covid secure to allow us to safely reopen for Stay with Us and day visits, dealing with TV starlets and their attendants and setting up caravan sites in record time. He will be missed by colleagues across FSC and we wish him well in his new job.

Keep well and stay safe

Mark