

Thu 13/05/2021 11:18

Dear Colleagues,

### **Guidance on Residentials**

The English DfE guidance eventually slid out rather later than promised. It's better news for us than anticipated, with residentials allowed to resume from 17<sup>th</sup> May with certain conditions including keeping bubbles of c30 learners separate. A lot of work is being done to update the risk assessments and OCOPS and provide all the information and reassurance that our customers will need. Centres will be working hard to keep school bubbles in allocated zones and although some rules have been relaxed within a school setting, they haven't been for our own staff or our own setting so many of the restrictions remain in place. It's worth remembering that we have to comply not only with the guidance for schools, but also the guidance for hospitality and providing a Covid-Secure workplace too.

### **Self-testing reminder**

We will be reminding schools to ensure that before they visit, learners and staff need to follow the guidelines and get tested. Please remember that reassuring customers that we are doing everything we can to keep everyone safe is a really important part of encouraging them to return. Please take advantage of the [free self-testing kits](#) that are available and test yourself twice a week. It's a vital part of keeping you, your colleagues and our visitors safe.

### **Feedback from the Finance and Administration Committee**

Staff rep on the F&A Committee, Di Warren raised staff concerns at the meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> April about the amount spent on the restructure totalling £359k. Although this is a lot of money, it includes professional advice and one-off redundancy payments, but I feel it is important to provide a little more detail on such a large sum. A budget of £100k was set aside for professional advice in relation to the restructure, of which so far £69k has been utilised. The advice was on 3 main issues:

- Legal advice on employment related matters to ensure that FSC operated fairly with staff and within the law. This advice was also compulsory to comply with the terms of FSC's employment insurance cover.
- Professional advice in relation to staff moving from the Teachers' Pension Scheme into another suitable scheme.
- Legal advice around the 'lifeboat scenario', which was trying to find a way for the charity to survive in the absolutely worst case scenario. We hope that advice will not be necessary, but we have to be prepared, just in case.

£290k has been paid in the form of one-off redundancy payments. In the first 3 months of 2021, payroll costs were £737k less than the same period in 2020. This is a significant saving in monthly cash outflow. In addition to this saving, FSC has also received £450k in Furlough grants. Can I reiterate my thanks to Di and our other staff reps who have again demonstrated how being a rep plays a valuable role in highlighting issues that are of particular concern to staff.

### **FSC Brand**

Thanks for all the valuable and enthusiastic feedback on the slack channel #fsc-brand. It has been overwhelmingly positive along with a lot of relief expressed that a much needed re-brand is being considered. The team are picking up on the comments. Many of the issues have been or will be addressed, it's just that they couldn't fit months of work and all the creatives into a 20 minute presentation. The visuals and photos for example will cover a much more diverse mix of both people and places. There has also been a lot of interest in the font. Following feedback earlier in the process, a new font 'FS Me' is being used which was actually developed by the charity Mencap who

will receive a donation for each font license purchased. Every letter of FS Me was tested for its appeal and readability with a range of learning disability groups across the UK. It's reassuring to see the level and depth of expertise that has gone into this project. We are also looking to find a way to engage those staff that have not been able to get involved yet. There is lots to do, and little budget to do it with but it's good having the backing of staff.

### **Yesterday's All Staff Zoom**

The link to yesterday's meeting is [here](#) where you can catch up on the new policies relating to spending and claiming expenses, the Biolinks Project and Nature Friendly Schools. The link to the Nature Friendly Schools infographic mentioned by Sam T can be found [here](#) and there will be more on the plans for Year 2 of the project in next week's catch up.

### **New Ecology Sector Archive**

FSC is a founding member of the new Applied Ecology Resources (AER) digital offering. It aims to unlock ecological content that is quite often trapped in 'grey' literature ie factual and research-based material produced outside traditional commercial and academic channels. As a member, FSC now has number of our project reports archived on the site. With these documents now in the public domain, they can be referenced by both FSC and the wider sector. This will help improve both our credibility and reach within the ecology sector, hopefully leading to more organisations approaching us for both contract work and partnership on grant applications. It also means that these reports will not disappear as staff move on. You can find the FSC content uploaded to AER [here](#). Kerion Brown is the account holder so the priority is archiving the BioLinks and any legacy biodiversity project literature. However, if there are any other FSC documents that you feel are suitable for this resource please send them to him for consideration.

### **Ofqual Student Guide**

With results season looming, a [Student guide to awarding: summer 2021](#) has been published and Ofqual are keen that the guide reaches as many students and their families as possible. It applies to England, Wales and N Ireland.

### **Special Mention**

On a lighter note, I notice that it's now a year since many of us were cheered up by the antics of Sports Commentor Andrew Cotter and his dogs Olive and Mabel on what became their breakthrough hit 'The Company Meeting' which resonates with many Zoom users still. I know that they have become a firm favourite with many at Head Office and you can see this and the other episodes here on [YouTube](#)

Stay safe and keep well

Mark