

Thu 20/05/2021 13:22

Dear Colleagues,

To slightly mis-quote Shakespeare the path out of lockdown never did run smooth and I'm sorry that getting back to anything like normal will continue to be very bumpy. On the positive side I know that more than one 'whoop' has been shared by staff as some of our centres in England have once again resounded to the sound of visitors enjoying some much missed outdoor learning. The news from Wales is more disappointing, with the updated government guidance inexplicably still advising against residential visits with no definitive date on when this might change.

Because of this we have had to make the assumption that we are unlikely to be delivering school residentials through Dale Fort, Orielton and Margam until September. Inevitably as this is normally peak time this will have a significant financial impact. To mitigate that risk of future cancellation we will look now at moving and rearranging bookings with customers in a timely manner rather than keep everyone waiting for a change in guidance that may never come in time or may be in a form that makes delivering courses almost impossible when combined with the Welsh hospitality rules. This I know adds to the considerable workload of the sales and admin staff and will cause disappointment. Centre Managers and staff I know are having to be even more flexible than usual, but this early decision does, I hope at least to provide some degree of certainty, especially around the recruitment of additional staff. Rhyd y Creuau in North Wales has been identified as an exception as it currently has enough staff in place to enable it to respond quickly to an improvement in the guidance if that were indeed to happen.

In addition to this, Ofqual has just proposed to continue with reduced fieldwork and NEA work into 2022. The proposals don't appear to have been well thought through, make any reference to the changed guidance allowing residentials or acknowledge that we are all in a very different place to where we were when the decision was made a year ago. As I am sure you are aware this could have a significant impact and we are working closely with the GA to develop a suitably forthright response.

However, it's not all bad news and other alternative areas of business including in Wales are able to continue. The ongoing confusion over the 'Travel Traffic Light' system may well see increased bookings for our holiday offers.

Nature Friendly Schools Year2

Following last week's [handy infographic](#) on the first year of NFS, I promised an update on the plans for year two. FSC staff have welcomed around 100 new schools who have joined us for the second year of the Nature Friendly Schools project. In the past few weeks FSC staff have delivered online CPD training to 125+ teachers, starting a year of CPD support aimed at increasing teacher confidence to deliver outdoor learning. The project is funded by DEFRA and the Department of Education. It seeks to positively impact children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, engagement with school and their care and concern for the environment by training and mentoring school staff to deliver outdoor learning. Over the next year we'll be welcoming some Nature Friendly Schools to an overnight stay, giving the pupils an opportunity to experience all the benefits of an FSC residential, as well as sharing our expertise with school staff. Thanks to the publications team, we'll also be sharing our well known fold-out guides with all the schools taking part. The project hopes to build on the body of evidence that demonstrates the positive impacts of outdoor learning, ultimately focussed on informing policy change at the highest levels. I'm sure we all agreed that outdoor learning taking a more significant role in the school curriculum would be a positive change for everyone.

Temporary Changes to the Regional Structures

With the recent departure of Simon Ward and upcoming departure of Andy Taylor there will be some interim organisational changes. The three current regions of North, West and East will become two: North and South. Rhyd y Creuau and Preston Montford have already joined the North and the Birmingham work will now be managed by the Preston Montford team. Helen Robertson will temporarily manage Amersham and Bishop's Wood to ensure some continuity in the South and I'd like to thank her for taking on this extra role. To keep it simple we have dropped the Group Operations Manager (GOM) job title and reverted back to Deputy Head of Group which more closely describes the role. There continues to be a lot of cross over between strategy and operations and the Heads of Group and Deputy Heads of group will continue to work closely together.

FSC Youth Council and Young Darwin Scholarship

We now have 12 engaging young people who have been appointed as FSC's Youth Council. They will be helping with FSC's youth engagement and content. They get sent weekly emails and we have bi-monthly meetings, with the second meeting coming up at the end of this month. After having to cancel last's year's programme, the [Young Darwin Scholarship](#) is back for 2021 but I'm pleased to say in a bigger format across five locations and to a wider age group with scholarships available for 16-17 year olds and 18-25 year olds. It is now open for applications and the cost is 90% subsidised. If you know of young people who would be interested in developing their field skills (especially as so many have missed out on outdoor opportunities this year) please encourage them to apply. The closing date is 27th June.

Free Wildlife Guides for Young People

This week, FSC has launched an exciting campaign to send [free wildlife ID guides](#) in the post to young people in July. This is part of our involvement with the DEFRA funded Generation Green project. The main purpose is for young people to receive the high-quality guides they need to connect with nature and take on roles in the green economy that record and protect the natural environment. This campaign will run marketing activities until 10th June to attract people in England aged 16–25 and those working with this age group to register to receive their free FSC wildlife ID fold out chart. We have 5,000 pairs of guides. FSC will then develop relationships by sharing other ways for people to get involved with FSC, including subsidised Eco-Skills courses. The marketing activities focus on our partner organisations in the Access Unlimited consortium sharing FSC's registration invite to engage their supporters. In addition to our own and paid social media, the FSC Youth Council is helping too. Please spread the word with your networks and any enquiries should be sent to youth.engagement@field-studies-council.org

GCSE in Natural History

Cambridge Assessment hosted a webinar on the progress being made towards a GCSE in Natural History. It's [well worth a watch](#) where you can hear both Tim Oates from Cambridge Assessment and friend of FSC Mary Colwell provide an update. FSC was mentioned both for our involvement in the campaign and in being known for providing high quality teacher development resources. There is a lot of interest and if the proposal gets the go-ahead from DfE, one possible business opportunity for FSC (in addition to the obvious) will be the need for teacher training and CPD for those from a wider range of background subjects rather than the more usual route via biology and geography.

Outdoor Office Day 27th May 2021

I have been sitting on this initiative kindly sent to me by Gill Miller in the hope that the weather might be as conducive to [Outdoor Office Day](#) as it was this time last year. As an organisation that likes to make the link between getting outdoors and out mental health you may want to join in.

Special Mention

I'd like to thank Bek and Simon from publications, Dylan from youth engagement and Mel from marketing to all the hard work put into the Free Wildlife Guides campaign.

Keep well and stay safe

Mark