

Thu 23/09/2021 12:59

Dear Colleagues,

Plans for Education Catch Up in England?

None of us know whether the new Education Secretary will be able to secure more catch up money. My letter to Nadhim Zahawi set out the role that we know outdoor learning can play in catch up. Our proposal is for him to pull together a truly national outdoor learning catch up plan, based on past and present successful projects from London Challenge to Nature Friendly Schools. There is good work being done in various government silos, but it needs someone with a bit of vision and oomph to bring it together. It's probably easier to organise than a vaccine roll out. In the meantime, head of Ofsted Amanda Spielman in a webinar gave a thoughtful analysis of the scale of education loss due to the pandemic and the possible remedies. You can [see it here](#) and the first 15 minutes are particularly relevant. She has always been an advocate for the broad and balanced curriculum, the importance of enrichment activities and school trips.

MPs

I wrote to all our centre MPs recently, partly to let them know that we have fully reopened but also to invite them to visit. Comments and assumptions made by policy makers across the UK (and sometimes unfortunately repeated by MPs) showed a very out of date understanding of how we operate. Now is a good time to put that right. It's important that our political representatives are fully informed and can hold policy makers to account. A visit by our new Amersham MP is already being arranged but now Rhyd-y-creuau MP Robin Millar and Slapton's MP Anthony Mangnall have also expressed an interest. We now have only two MPs who have spectacularly failed to respond to any of our letters over the last few years.

Radio

Following our press work on the welcome return of outdoor learning, Radio Shropshire popped along to Preston Montford to learn more. You can hear Centre Manager Arran Holdsworth do an excellent interview and it set the tone for a wider discussion around the importance of outdoor education on the popular mid-morning show. If you'd like to hear it, [here's the listen again link](#) and Arran's interview is at 1hr18 mark. I'd like to thank Arran for fitting in the request on top of what was already a very busy day.

John Barker Legacy

At the Finance and Administration Committee today, the final details of a generous and significant bequest from the late John Barker were confirmed. For those that have not yet heard, John was a trustee for many years and also served as Honorary Vice-President. Sadly John died during the first wave of Covid in May 2020 and therefore it was not possible to have a funeral. Nettlecombe staff however helped to arrange a small event to scatter his ashes in one of his favourite places. He left FSC £666K, something for which we are profoundly grateful.

Special Mention: the Secondary Geography Quality Mark

Congratulations to all those involved in seven of our centres gaining [this Geographical Association award](#). Blencathra, Preston Montford, Flatford Mill, Juniper, Nettlecombe, Rhyd-y-creuau and Slapton have attained Centre of Excellence status which is valid for the next three years. This is a fantastic achievement and the result of a huge amount of work. The awards are not easy to come by and it can take more than one attempt. Staff from all the centres submitted work and the whole project was collated by Jo Harris, Richard Peasland and Charlie Foster.

UK wide consultation: Making Flexible Working the Default

The heavily trailed consultation documents have been published today. It's an open consultation for both businesses and individuals on making changes to the current flexible working regulations. More details including how you can respond are [here](#). The closing date is 1st December so there is a bit of time to respond.

And finally

Lorna Shipp who retired from FSC after 43 years has received the gift that we organised to say thank you for long service. It was a beautiful garden bench which arrived last week. We also say farewell to Andy Kelly who is leaving Blencathra as chef after 23 years. We wish him well as he moves onto a new chapter.

Keep safe and stay well

Mark