

Thu 30/09/2021 10:59

Dear Colleagues,

I hope that you have not been impacted too much by the fuel shortages attributed, apparently to a combination of a lack of petrol haulier drivers and a spate of panic buying. Transport Secretary Grant Shapps is reported as telling the BBC: "We are starting to see panic buying drop, with more grades of fuel available at more petrol stations." So hopefully there is an end in sight to the long queues outside petrol stations and the impact on our work will be limited.

Thanks to everyone for their hard work across what continues to be a very busy time of the year in our centres. When life gets busy again and centres are full it's easy to forget that FSC is also making a difference through its project-based work. Did you know that in the last year FSC has worked with nearly 6,500 children, young people and adult learners through projects? Projects often reach deep into the community and enable us to work with people that FSC would not normally reach, helping us to be true to our mission to work with 'everyone'. They also offer FSC a chance to try out new approaches, develop staff, bring in additional income and develop strong partnerships with other specialists. Today I wanted to shine a spotlight on some of the current work going on and showcase some of the projects FSC is currently running:

Generation Green contact: Dylan Byrne (FSC Youth Engagement Officer)

Supports young people, teachers and youth leaders to better understand the environment and green economy.

- 530+ young people have accessed subsidised courses from the Eco-Skills portfolio. Improving their environmental knowledge and increasing their employability.
- 700+ students will benefit from attending subsidised practical fieldwork sessions at FSC centres this Autumn.

Young Darwin Scholarship contact: Dylan Byrne

This project helps young naturalists learn key field and identification skills from environmental experts and receive tailored career and employability skills sessions.

- 60 young Darwin scholars have attended 5 courses at FSC centres in 2021.
- A scholar said "I've learnt more here in a week than three years at university".
- We have a new donations campaign in progress to support even more young people to attend the scholarship next year.

Vision England project contact: Pip Wilson (Senior Tutor at FSC Preston Montford)

This project offers free virtual workshops, day events and residentials focussing on the environment, for young people with disabilities or additional needs.

- This summer Pip worked with young people with complex needs to renovate the garden at a SENSE day care centre in Smethwick (West Midlands).
- A particular highlight was when one young person, who struggles with communication, became so excited about a particular rose bush that he knocked half the petals of waving his arms in joy!

Green Influencers contact: Pip Wilson

A new project that aims to encourage young people from areas experiencing deprivation to take the lead and undertake environmental action and positively influence their peers and communities. If you know any schools, youth groups or others in the West Midlands who might be interested do encourage them to contact Pip.

Nature Friendly Schools Contact: Sam Thurston (Nature Friendly Schools Officer)

This government funded partnership project is focussed on testing a variety of approaches to support teachers to increase the amount of outdoor learning taking place across 99 schools in England, located in areas experiencing high levels of deprivation. Measuring the impact of increased time spent taking part in outdoor learning upon pupils and school communities. This year FSC staff are:

- Training teachers during 26 overnight residentials for pupils across 5 FSC locations. A teacher taking part in a recent residential shared “this experience is positively impacting the pupils resilience and confidence to try new things”.
- Delivering teacher training through 16 live online webinars.
- FSC fold-out guides have been posted to all schools involved and encouraging them to use them.
- Managing and delivering a continuous program of internal project evaluation.

BioLinks Contact: Kieron Brown (BioLinks Project Manager)

Provides subsidised training courses, learning opportunities and digital tools focussed on invertebrate identification for anyone involved or interested in biological recording, to build and strengthen the community.

- 10 online courses to date this year – totalling 1,261 bookings.
- 28 Natural History Live virtual talks attended by over 3,300 attendees!
- Regional training programmes in the West Midlands and London have also resumed with 45 place-based courses and events delivered or scheduled for 2021.

The next BioLinks online course is Bee Nesting Ecology and Conservation, it's free for FSC staff to attend, email biolinks@field-studies-council.org to request a free staff space!

Forgotten Places Contact: Simon Norman (Resource Development Officer)

A new partnership project managed by Trees for Cities, focussed on increasing and improving tree canopy cover, enhancing urban forest management, and inspiring aspiration through green jobs and skills across 7 coastal towns and cities in England.

- Forgotten Places will engage 9485 people (targeting young people 16-24) through volunteering opportunities, skills training and resources,
- FSC will deliver online and place-based training to 600 people and produce three new fold-out guides to tree identification.

Greenwich Park Revealed Contact: Helen Robertson (FSC Epping Forest Day Centre Manager)

A lottery funded 4-year partnership project focussed on revealing, restoring, protecting and sharing the unique heritage of Greenwich Park. FSC will be delivering the education element of this project:

- 12 Teacher Training sessions, 122 School Sessions, 20 Archaeology sessions, 28 Family Discovery Days, 10 Adult learning workshops and testing a new Orienteering Trail.
- Developing ‘The Wilderness’ which will see a part of Greenwich Park redeveloped as a fantastic natural discovery space for schools and community groups.

Mission: Invertebrate Contact: Helen Robertson

Aims to enrich London’s Royal Parks by supporting the parks’ most important inhabitants upon which all wildlife relies, invertebrates! The Royal Parks are carrying out expert invertebrate research and developing habitats across the parks.

- FSC London staff are delivering schools sessions and family activities across Bushy Park, Greenwich and The Regent's Park.
- FSC BioLinks are supporting the citizen science events.

I hope this gives you all a sense of what is going on. Even though this is a longer update than normal it cannot possibly cover all of our projects! A few honourable mentions include the fantastic work over the summer at FSC Millport funded from NatureScot, FSC Rhyd y creuau's work on an outreach program in Rhyl funded by a local windfarm, and a new project in Wanstead Park near FSC Epping Forest working with teachers and young people.

Furlough

As I am sure you are all aware, the government furlough scheme ends today, 30 September 2021. This means that anyone currently on flexi furlough will be required return to their normal contracted hours with effect from 1 October 2021. Thank you all for your continued commitment and understanding through what has been a difficult period for everyone. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact hr@field-studies-council.org.

Christmas Cards

Some might think it's a little early, but the publications team are preparing for Christmas already with our fantastic Eco-friendly FSC Christmas cards featuring winter birds. Made from 100% recycled material using minimal packaging, with no glitter or laminates.

Thank You

Finally I would like to thank Sam Thurston for being the 'guest editor' for this catch up, he has given us some really positive stories about FSC's impact from across the charity which I hope balances what can often appear as all the 'doom and gloom' out there.

Stay safe and keep well

Mark