

Thu 14/10/2021 09:26

Dear Colleagues

The catch up is slightly earlier this week as I am attending the board of trustees meeting today. It's the first opportunity for us to meet face to face for over 18 months and it has been great to meet up at Juniper Hall. Having all got used to the zoom chat function and mute button, we will now have to remember that things said out loud will be heard by everyone and you can't switch your camera off while you replenish your cup of tea.

### **The first annual People and Nature Report**

Natural England have produced this report, based on data collected from a representative sample of adults across England between April 2020 and March 2021. This data explores how people experience and think about the environment and also coincided with Covid lockdowns and restrictions. It shows high levels of appreciation for green space and awareness of its importance for health and wellbeing. Later this month they will be publishing their Children's People and Nature Survey which looks at children's experience, behaviours and thoughts about nature. The full report or an infographic version can be found [here](#).

### **A proposal for a new umbrella organisation: the Outdoor Learning Association**

A proposal to merge the Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL), the Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres (AHOEC) the Outdoor Council (OC) and British Activity Providers Association (BAPA) into one single organisation is being consulted upon. There has clearly been a lot of deliberation, the idea having first been suggested by FSC's own Chair Pete Higgins in an article in 1997. The sector organisations do suffer from a plethora of acronyms that look like the worst letter choices on Countdown. Following our plans to use our full name more, having one organisation with a name that also sets out what it does without expecting people to guess would be progress, as would a more unified voice. Details obviously have to ironed out, but the consultation is certainly a welcome step.

### **Government Consultations relating to Plan B, the Autumn and Winter Covid plan**

A couple of very short two week consultations have come and gone this month. We are not directly impacted but are keeping a watching brief as the results give a clue to government thinking. One was relating to settings (not ours) that might require mandatory vaccine certification or staff testing under plan B. The other was additional contingency plans for Teacher Assessed Grades if exams are further disrupted, although it's government's "firm intention that exams will take place next year". That kind of statement reminds me of when a cabinet minister "has the PM's full support". We all know what that means.

### **MP visit to FSC Amersham**

Sarah Green MP has visited Amersham, she of the Lib Dem landslide fame in what was a safe tory seat. Helen Robertson reported that she had clearly done her research about FSC and what we offer and came ready to be outside with the students. They talked about the work at Amersham, the wider FSC, the impact of covid and inspiring future generations. The Outdoor Education APPG (all party parliamentary group) was discussed to which several other FSC Centre MPs belong. She is keen to come back for Elf School in December. Who wouldn't be? Thank you to Helen and her staff for hosting a visit during an already busy time.

### **HRH the Prince of Wales**

We are very pleased that the Prince of Wales has agreed to remain our Patron for the next five years despite what must be an increasing workload. His interests on climate change, biodiversity and skills

for young people continue to overlap with ours. We have sent him the latest impact report in the post.

### **Special Mention**

As I said at the beginning of this post, we have been hosted by the Juniper Hall team for this Board of Trustees meeting. It has been really great to meet the team again in person. I know how busy and stretched everyone has been and I am sure the team at Juniper could have done without the extra burden of looking after us but they have pulled out all the stops to make our Board members feel welcome. Thanks to all of you and in particular the hospitality and catering staff who have been fantastic.

Stay safe and keep well

Mark