

Thu 08/09/2022 14:03

Dear Colleagues,

Her Majesty the Queen

As I was about to send this message, I heard the sad news that the Queen is under 'medical supervision'. I am sure that we will all be concerned at this news, and that our thoughts will be with her and her family at this time.

New PM and Energy Bill

I waited before publishing the catch up today as I wanted to get a sense of how today's announcement about energy bills might impact upon us as individuals, families and as a charity. From what I have seen so far, the new Prime Minister Liz Truss has announced plans to cap average household energy bills at £2,500 a year from October. As I read it now, a £400 rebate, also in October, takes it down to £2,100. Additional payments of £650 for those on qualifying benefits will also stay in place. But there is no suggestion those payments will be repeated so average households will see an energy price rise of over 25%. We will have to consider how this might impact on our customers' behaviour over the next two years but I see this announcement as generally positive and favourable. With regards to our charitable operations, we have been offered "equivalent support" for a six month period but it is not clear what that means yet as they have not yet published the unit cost per unit of gas and electricity that they are using to generate the domestic cap and cannot yet confirm whether the same unit cost will be applied to business customers. It is a step in the right direction but I think we will be looking for greater clarity as we go through our budgeting process to understand the impact on us, and on schools and universities.

One policy idea mentioned during the campaign which could have an impact was the proposal to move the start of the university academic year to January with places offered on actual not predicted grades. Proposals for changing the system are to be brought forward within 12 months. Watch this space. I will leave comments on the impact of other policies such as the is also lifting the ban on fracking – and issuing licenses for north sea oil extraction for

New Secretary of State for Education

Kit Malthouse becomes the fourth English education secretary in just over two months, and the fifth in the past year if you choose to count Michelle Donelan who managed just 35 hours. James Cleverly has moved on before he could respond to my welcome letter. I have worked with Kit Malthouse before in a previous role, and I hope he sticks around long enough to unpack his pencil case and find his named coat peg. One of the things in the in tray along with looming strikes and school heating bills, will be to sort the less than smooth start to the [Oak Academy arm's length body](#) that was to be a one stop shop for all sorts of curriculum resources. United Learning, another large academy chain, have taken their ball away and are setting up a rival site. The new PM may approve of this bit of healthy market competition. Apparently she isn't keen on large government or quangos anyway.

School Trip Pressures

We are currently experiencing one of our busiest Septembers but it will come as no surprise that school budgets are under significant pressures. This article [School trips could be axed in bid to keep staff](#) popped up on the BBC Website yesterday. Having anticipated this issue, the sales and marketing teams had already planned to focus our autumn campaign on how this charity can help support schools by flagging up Grants for Schools, our low season pricing options and our free teaching resources via the digital hub.

Westfield Rewards

With rising inflation, don't forget that staff members can take advantage of the offers on the [Westfield Reward](#) site which has discounts, reloadable store cards and offers from a big range of retailers.

Special Mention

I know that on top of a busy day job, the duty rota brings additional work. I'd like to thank Robyn Landy who, like many of you previously, had to deal with an out of hours emergency recently. Robyn's involved appalling weather when Nettlecombe recently experienced 110mm of rain in 24 hours leading to gutter problems, flooding and some worried self catering customers. Thanks also to Leigh Cripps from the Infrastructure Team was able to help with repairs the very next day.

Welcome to Field Studies Council

Isabel Zausner has joined Dale Fort and Chelsea Boden has returned as Hospitality and Catering Assistants

At Head Office, Rebecca Jones is our new Natural History Learning Development Officer and Benjamin Hoad is our new Recruitment Lead

At Castle Head, Mark Williams has joined as the new Maintenance Officer and Sandra Williams as Cook

Nicola Williams is returning to Rhyd-y-creuau as Hospitality and Catering Assistant

Stephen Savage has joined Juniper as a Seasonal Tutor

Stay safe and keep well

Mark