

Thu 08/01/26 08:00

Dear Colleagues

Happy New Year to you all.

British Ecological Society Conference

Whilst many of us were winding down for Christmas, the Biodiversity Team were busy at the [BES Annual Meeting and Conference in Edinburgh](#) where they ran a very well attended interactive workshop. Around 90 people took part in: *Rewilding Ourselves: Tackling the Extinction of Experience for Nature Recovery* which looked at *how can we recover lost connections between people and nature to support biodiversity and wellbeing?* Thank you to Jenny Beech and Clare Rooney from the Biodiversity team for running the workshop and our stand.



Scottish Outdoor Residentials [Bill](#)

Thanks to the Marketing Team's quick turnaround in response to the legislation being passed, our [comments were prominent](#). Editors appreciate being able to get hold of copy and quotes so close to a holiday. I have also been in contact with Liz Smith MSP to congratulate her on getting her bill through because it was no easy task, especially as her party is not in government. The next step is to produce guidance (the bill itself is only 4 pages long) and stakeholders such as ourselves will be consulted on more details including standards, content and the all-important issue of funding. Those of us who watched the [debate](#) were heartened by the cross party cooperation and the focus on ensuring that disadvantaged learners do not miss out.

Helpdesk Support

Here's a New Year's Resolution for us all to help the Digital Team centrally manage and effectively prioritise support tickets: please don't lodge requests directly with individual team members via Teams, Slack or staff email. Please use one of the following official helpdesk support channels:

- For Cinolla support – please submit your request via email to: cinolla@field-studies-council.org
- For Data requests – please submit your request via email to: data@field-studies-council.org
- For any other Digital support – please submit your request via email to: digital@field-studies-council.org

The need for urgent/emergency support is rare, but when required please call the team.

Use of AI in 2026

As we get to grips with AI, our policy and guidance on its use will be shaped and shared with you by the AI Working Group in the coming months. A reminder that you still have time to submit your expression of interest in being a part of that group [here](#).

In the meantime, when using AI for work purposes, please do not use any of the free AI tools that are available. Instead use the Copilot tool/app that is included as part your 365 work account.

You can access it from your 365 home screen or [here](#).

Copilot in 365 doesn't use any data we supply as training data, so data submitted won't be shared publicly. The AI Working Group will be issuing further guidance in due course.

Our Signs of Spring survey is now open

Once again we're excited to be working with the Royal Society of Biology to track [10 key early indicators](#) of spring across the UK. Nature can surprise us so if you spot snowdrops or daffodils in bloom or even an active ladybird please [add your sighting to our survey](#) and help us track how spring is unfolding this year.

We're asking all staff and trustees to help us spread the word and share our socials with friends, family and customers because the more people taking part, the better our picture of spring's early arrival. We are however, slightly adapting our print media work this week so as not to appear oblivious to Storm Goretti.

Past Field Studies Council Trustees awarded MBEs

In the King's New Year Honours List for 2026, Nicholas Howden was awarded an MBE for services to water management and education and past Chair of the Board Des Thompson was awarded his MBE for services to nature conservation. Des is still helping us with our project with North Ayrshire Council.

Welcome to Field Studies Council

New starters this week:

Sally Fray has joined the team at Millport as Education Team Leader.

Ross Erskine has also joined the team at Millport as Casual Deckhand and Casual Maintenance & Estates Assistant.

Simon Reynolds has joined the team at Nettlecombe as Residential Centre Manager.

Emilie Janman has joined the team at Slapton as Volunteer Coordinator.

Lucy Chesnaye has joined the team at Epping Forest as Administrator.

Shelly Tyson has joined the team at Castle Head as Administrator.

Also this week:

Ed Gent has been promoted to the role of Senior Tutor at Nettlecombe.

Rahul Daima has been promoted to the role of Tutor at Millport.

Lucy Davies has returned to Slapton as Tutor.

Best regards

Mark