

English Outdoor Council

2012/2013 Annual Report

Full Members

Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres
British Activity Holiday Association Ltd
Christian Camping International
Institute for Outdoor Learning
National Association of Field Studies Officers
Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel
Outdoor Industries Association
The Scout Association
Young Explorers' Trust

Consulting Members

British Canoe Union
British Caving Association
British Orienteering Federation
Cyclists' Touring Club
Department for Education
Mountain Leader Training England
Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)
Royal Yachting Association
SkillsActive
Sport and Recreation Alliance

Aims of the Council

The formal title of the Council is the English Council for Outdoor Education, Training and Recreation. Its aims are:

- To draw together the principal representative organisations operating in the field of outdoor education, training and recreation.
- To promote understanding of the nature and purposes of work in the outdoors.
- To develop opportunities for participation in adventurous activities and experiences outdoors.
- To encourage the provision of outdoor experiences of the highest quality, safety, value and enjoyment.
- To promote environmentally sustainable and responsible practice in the use of the outdoor environment and to promote sustainable behavior more generally.
- To communicate on behalf of those operating in the outdoors and influence policy makers.
- To keep societal trends under review, maintain a future focus and identify possible opportunities for the outdoor sector.

Officers

Chair	Martin Smith
Vice-Chair	Rob Lucas
Secretary/Treasurer	Mary Sanders

Chair's Report 2013

Our work over the last 12 months has been greatly influenced by the Olympic Legacy, National Curriculum Reform, the future of AALA and an Outdoor Register. In addition, we have continued to lend our support to the development of an All Party Parliamentary Group on Learning Outside the Classroom and the Britain on Foot Campaign. Within this context our focus continues to be shaped by the 5 key aims outlined in our current Business Plan:

- To lobby for outdoor learning to be embedded within the formal school curriculum and to create an expectation that all young people, including those who could not afford to do so without financial support, should have a progressive range of outdoor learning experiences, including at least one residential experience.
- To continue to develop the role of EOC as an effective umbrella body for the sector.
- To disseminate the advantage of a balanced view of risks and benefits and to promote an adventurous approach to life.
- To ensure that there is proportionate safety and quality assurance for outdoor activities.
- To review societal trends to maintain a future focus and identify possible opportunities for the outdoor sector.

While reflecting on the last year it is clear that many of our key lobbying objectives have been met or partly met. During the year we wrote to Mr Cameron, and Lord Coe, following the Olympic games, to ensure that Outdoor and Adventurous Activities would be seen as an integral part of the new curriculum and legacy plans. We followed this up by working with and supporting partners in a response to the National Curriculum Consultation.

I am pleased to say that the National Curriculum Framework document, published yesterday, provides the opportunity for schools to deliver a progressive range of outdoor learning experiences as part of the PE curriculum. It also embeds fieldwork as an integral part of the geography curriculum and encourages schools to explore their local and contrasting environments over their school career, including fieldwork, within science.

We already recognise that the Government fund a residential experience as part of the National Citizens Service programme, which could be seen as providing the residential experience we desire. This said, there is still a feeling that this may be too late in a young person's development and that we should continue to work towards an expectation of a residential experience at an earlier age as well.

The introduction of the Pupil Premium has provided much needed financial support to pupils on free school meals. The response from Edward Timpson MP (Parliamentary

Under Secretary of State for Children and Families) to a letter we sent in October very much supported our cause by stating that use of Pupils Premium 'can include expenditure on outdoor activities'. I know, from my own experience, that some schools have increased the number of residentials they are providing as a direct result of Pupil Premium. Of course Pupil Premium is there to improve progress and attainment and research work by Randall, published in the last 12 months and the growing body of research that is emanating from the Learning Away programme run by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation is beginning to add some evidence to OfSTED's observation that:

'When planned and implemented well, learning outside the classroom contributed significantly to raising standards and improving pupils' personal, social and emotional development.' OSfTED 2008.

The legacy work has resulted in a meeting with Baroness Campbell and a closer working relationship with the Youth Sports Trust. The introduction of the Primary Sporting Premium certainly offers the opportunity for primary schools to develop a purposeful Outdoor and Adventurous Activities programme as part of the PE curriculum.

In terms of the personal, social and emotional well being of young people, we recently provided evidence to the Youth Select Committee on a 'Curriculum for Life', and the work that Andrew Denton is undertaking through the 'Britain on Foot' campaign highlights the value of the outdoors to a young person's health and well-being. Similar work has recently been promoted and undertaken by the National Trust and Andy Simpsons presentation to us on 'Project Wild Thing', due for launch later this month, shows the value of the outdoors for a young persons development and has enabled us to engage with a key national organisation.

As for challenges ahead, I have recognised that schools, in particular, will need clear advice, direction and signposting in order that they can make sense of the opportunities that have been placed before them. A key role for the EOC will be to work with partners and raise the profile of outdoor learning and outdoor and adventurous activities across the curriculum and provide guidance to schools on the role that the outdoors plays in the development of young people both physically and mentally. Much of this could be generic in nature and further support the role that the voluntary sector plays in engaging young people outside of the school setting.

In order that we can recognise some of these initiatives and take our future lobbying role forward we have reviewed our 'Making the Case' document, which provides the underpinning evidence for the campaigning that we do. We have recognised that we need to highlight this work and promotional material is being developed, in support of this we plan to run a joint conference with the Paul Hamlyn Foundation to promote the value of Residential experiences and outdoor learning early next year.

Alongside a review of 'Making the case' the lobbying toolkit will be updated and we will look to re-launch both sets of material and encourage individuals to meet with their MP. An initial database of MPs, who may be sympathetic to our cause, has been drawn up and I envisage the next 12 months as being key in developing this database and our lobbying efforts further.

Over the last 12 months we have represented the outdoor sector on the AAIAC managing forum and attended the Guardian debate on Outdoor Learning in December. Articles outlining our work have been published in the LOtC newsletter and we are regularly reported in IOL material, over the last 12 months our work has also been

recognised within the Outdoor Education Adviser's Panel website. We now issue regular Briefing Papers to members and I must thank Mary, our secretary, for providing much of the material for these. A key work area for myself over the coming year will be to update the website as a platform that promotes our work.

We continue to support the advantages of a balanced view of risks and benefits and promoting an adventurous approach to life that is carried out through EOC's role as parent body of the Campaign for Adventure. However, alongside this there continues to be an impasse relating the future of AALA. Both Scotland and Wales look set to continue with licensing and the process will continue in England until the baton, if there is still one there, is picked up again by this or a future government. The concept of an outdoor register is progressing being led by SkillsActive and supported by the AAIAAC Managing Forum.

EOC have remained members of the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom and continued to strengthen links to IOL with both Chief Executives attending meetings of the EOC as observers. We have also had quite a turnover of representatives of member organisations on the Board.

To help me into the transition as Chair I have been extremely grateful for the continued support of Randall, even more so when he agreed to be co-opted back onto the Board. It has been very clear to me as I began settling down into the position of Chair just how much time and commitment Randal gave to the EOC and made it the influential body it is today. Randall, thank you.

I am happy to say that as I write this we now have a full representation from all members on the EOC Board and Rob Lucas, as a much valued Vice Chair, and look forward to working with you all over the coming year

Martin Smith
Chair
July 2013