



The Institute for Outdoor Learning – An Overview



Brian Kitson, Chair of Trustees
Jo Barnett, Chief Executive of the IOL



Share your love of the outdoors with others

The Institute for Outdoor Learning is the professional body for organisations and individuals who use the outdoors to make a positive difference to others (UK based).

Introduction

The Institute for Outdoor Learning is the professional charity for organisations and individuals who use the outdoors to make a positive difference to others.

Outdoor learning is a term that covers ways of engaging with the outdoors for developmental purposes. Central to Outdoor Learning is the role of the practitioner. The IOL supports and develops the people and organisations that deliver Outdoor Learning

The field of outdoor learning is broad and incredibly rich. A wide variety of approaches, delivered by volunteers, professional practitioners and providers, engage participants of all ages and backgrounds in experiences that have the power to be life changing.

The IOL helps set standards and collaborates with many organisations to improve the quality of outdoor learning in the UK and beyond. This is based on evidence from research and proven practice.

Outdoor Learning practitioners and providers are building on the distinguished heritage of outdoor learning in the UK and are ready to respond to the challenges facing young people today.

By responding to significant societal challenges including climate change, equality & diversity in the outdoors, mental health and wellbeing, the IOL supports practitioners and providers to deliver the best possible outcomes to their participants.



863
Individual
Members



491
Organisational
Members



0.2%
Churn
Rate

The IOL is structured around four pillars

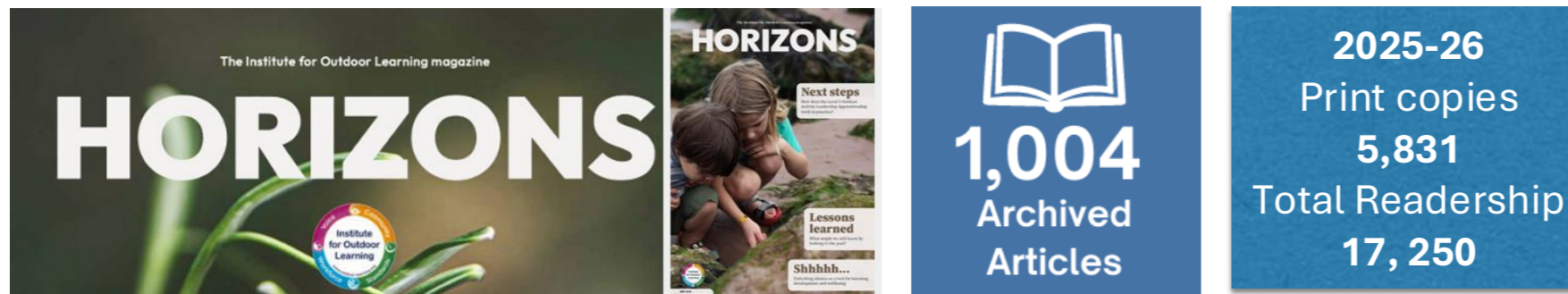


Are you interested in championing outdoor learning to policy makers, national organisations and governments?

What the IOL does...

Publishes the Horizons Magazine

Horizons is a quarterly publication which shares good practice articles written by Outdoor Learning professionals, for Outdoor Learning professionals.



Supports the Nature Premium campaign

A call for the government to introduce a Nature Premium for schools to guarantee regular time in nature for ALL children and young people, with additional funding and support for those who need it most.

Government Engagement

Provides the Secretariat for All Party Parliamentary Group for Outdoor Learning and respond to Government consultations and calls for evidence on behalf of its Members and the wider sector.

Outdoor Learning Stakeholder Group

This brings together a consortium of organisations who represent a specific part of the sector who have a key stake and focus on developing and leading outdoor learning across the UK.

Voice



Are you seeking others in outdoor learning to join up to share and develop practice?

What the IOL does...

Member Network Groups

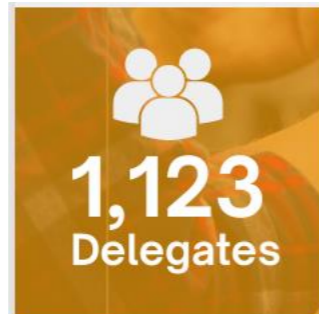
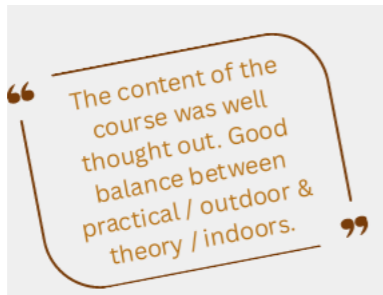
These are organised on a geographical basis which include regions of England, UK home nations and places overseas and tend to focus on running events.

Communities of Practice of members with specialist areas of expertise

These are led by volunteers and have greater structure. Some are responsible for professional occupational standard for qualifications and apprenticeships.

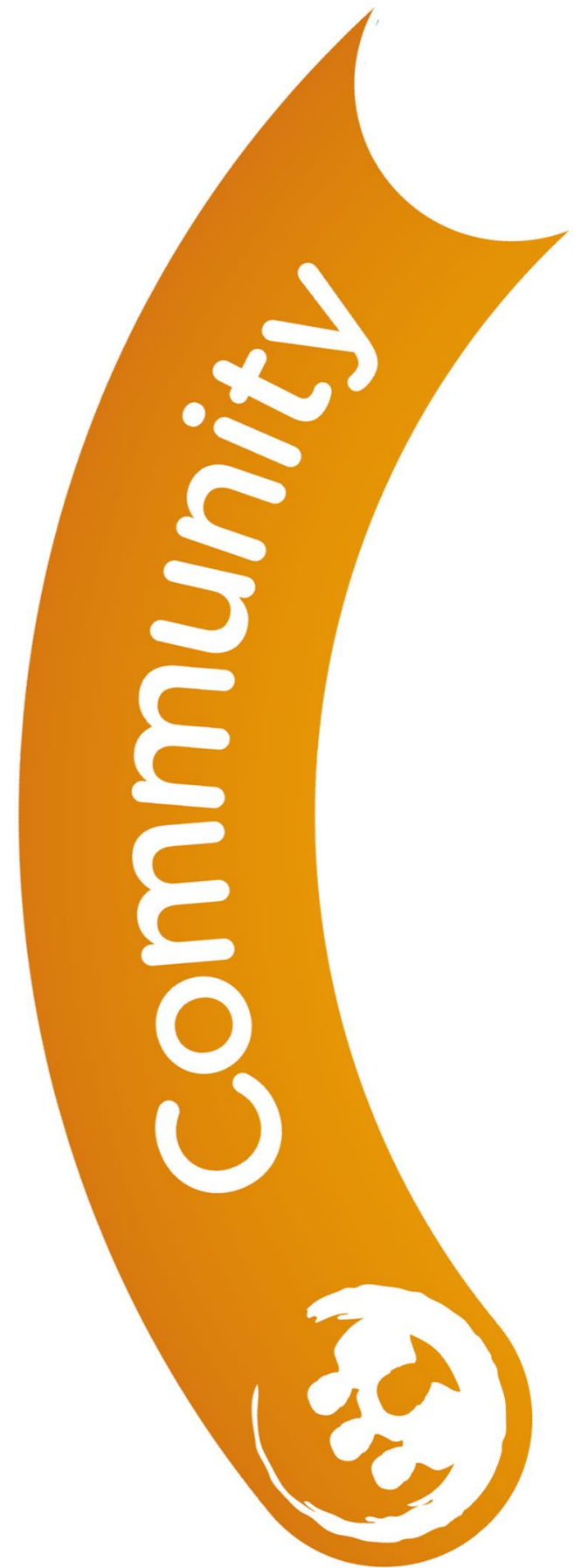
Directories

Where individuals and organisations can publicly share their details if they choose to do so. Currently being expanded to create a 'Fellowship'.



Events

These are a combination of IOL and volunteer led. Supported by the IOL central services and maybe webinars, online conferences or in-person. Each is required to be self financing although the IOL may support and underwrite before bookings income is generated.



Are you looking for career advice, professional development and recognition?

“We would highly recommend the Institute for Outdoor Learning to any business looking to add an extra layer of quality and credibility to their training awards, alongside the many other benefits of membership.”

What the IOL does...

Professional Awards and Recognition

The IOL offers its own developmental awards and routes that acknowledge accredited prior learning

Guidance that underpins the outdoor learning professional

This includes the IOL Codes of Practice, advice on continuing professional development, career options and the UK leading outdoor learning jobs website.

Apprenticeships

The IOL developed the Level 3 Outdoor Activity Instructor and Level 5 Outdoor Specialist Apprenticeships and remains the industry body for their respective occupational standards.

Activities Industry Mutual (AIM)

The IOL supports AIM which is a membership community formed of outdoor practitioners. AIM specialises in providing an alternative to insurance products and services for the activities sector.

Workforce





Are you interested in knowing about, developing and sharing research and good practice?

What the IOL does...

High Quality Outdoor Learning

These guides draw on research and practice from around the world but are written from a UK perspective. The guides consider structure, practice and outcomes and can be used for delivery, programme design and advocacy

Safety

This includes the Collective Knowledge project that is an innovation designed to support proactive safety management in outdoor learning and ensuring past knowledge and experience are not lost.

Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning

JAEOL aims to promote global dialogue, research, thinking, teaching and practice from critical perspectives. It publishes papers concerned with social, cultural, political, ethical and environmental issues in the outdoor studies field.

Guidance that sets the benchmark standards for the sector

These include statements that cover Outdoor Mental Health Interventions & Outdoor Therapy, environmental practice and Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging.

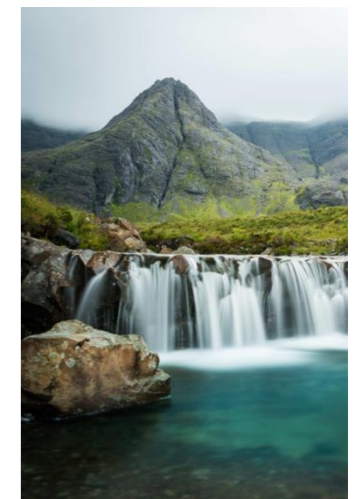


Championing Outdoor Learning



And finally...

The Institute for Outdoor Learning is ‘work in progress’ and is constantly working hard to reach the goal of a thriving Institute and flourishing outdoor learning sector. We may not reach this at the end of the next 3-year development plan, but we will try and hope to have some fun along the way!



Year	Key Aim	Key Action	Key Outcome
Yr1: 2025-26	Confidence and Sustainability #2	Cross the T's and dot the I's Attend to detail of IOL core functions & offer	Grow membership & partnerships, and increase credibility
Yr2: 2026-27	Aspiration and innovation	Take stock - what do we stop-continue-start? Challenge ourselves to be better	Provide leadership, fellowship, and support in outdoor learning
Yr3: 2027-28	Implementation & Consolidation	Deliver ‘Greater Product IOL’ ...	Thriving Institute and flourishing outdoor learning sector

‘Do What We Say We Will Do’ (DWWSWWD) Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner [The Leadership Challenge](#): Internal Credibility / External Expectations / Trust

