

Workshop programme and details



The poster features a circular logo for the Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL) with the text 'Community', 'Standards', 'Workforce', 'Voice', and 'www.outdoor-learning.org'. To the right, the text 'IOL 2026 CONFERENCE' is displayed in large, stylized letters, with 'IOL' in purple, '2026' in blue, and 'CONFERENCE' in orange. To the far right, the words 'NORTH' and 'WEST' are stacked vertically in green. Below the main title, 'BRATHAY HALL' and 'AMBLESIDE' are listed in large, bold, blue and green letters respectively. To the right of the venue names is a QR code with the text 'SCAN ME' above it. Below the QR code, the text 'Scan the QR / click the link FOR MORE' is written in orange, with a blue arrow pointing to the text and another blue arrow pointing to the QR code. The background of the poster shows a forest of tall evergreen trees. At the bottom, a dark banner contains the text 'Join us for an inspiring day of sharing, learning and networking' in white.

IOL 2026 CONFERENCE

BRATHAY HALL

AMBLESIDE

Friday
6TH February
2026

Scan the QR /
click the link
FOR MORE

**Join us for an inspiring day of sharing,
learning and networking**

IOL North West Conference 2026

Friday 6th February at Brathay Trust, Ambleside, Cumbria.

- IOL members £92
- Non-members £130
- Students £30
- **Exhibit space** is £200 and is an optional extra when you book as a delegate

BOOK NOW 

Keynote

Rich Ensoll Canoeing Round Ireland

The west coast of Ireland is known for towering cliffs, committing headlands, strong winds and vast ocean swells - 'you can't go out there in an open canoe!'



A few have sea kayaked round Ireland but until this summer no-one had canoeed. Come and hear the tales of Ronan, Rich and Johans 46 day journey round the emerald isle. Reflect on the power in committing to your dreams and revel in the reminder that like us you may not be the best but you're enough.

Rich Ensoll is a Senior lecturer in Outdoor Studies and the Programme Leader for BA (Hons) Outdoor Leadership at the University of Cumbria. He has a passion for all things to do with canoeing and inspiring others into the outdoors, and in the summer of 2025 with Johan Hoving circumnavigated Ireland in their traditional curragh-style canoe, Ronan.

Timetable

- 0900 - 0930 Arrivals and workshop sign up
- 0930 - 0950 Introductions – Regional chair Dave Harvey
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- 1630 Conference close
- 1645 - 1700 AGM

DOWNLOAD THE FULL WORKSHOP DETAILS [HERE](#):

<https://www.outdoor-learning.org/news-events/ems-event-calendar/iol-north-west-england-conference-2026.html>

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INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY IN YOUR ORGANISATION - IF YOU DO JUST ONE THING TO - DO THIS...

Encouraging organisations to undertake an access audit and explaining why that might be beneficial to both the user and the organisation. The most enabling bang for your buck you can do both cheaply and quickly. Relevant to all levels - at a strategic level you will see increased footfall, and at practitioner level you will understand how to incorporate accessibility into your sessions.

Aimed at all

HOSTS: Chris and Vicky Binks

Chris and Vicky Binks run Anyone Can - Real adventures in Amazing Places adapted to include people living with a disability.

OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE - BEING-IN-TIME

When we think of time, we are most likely going to think of clock time. This may be seen through ideas of efficiency and productivity or even control. Perhaps we may also think of time through a physics lens as the 4th dimension.

In this workshop however, we will build on the current zeitgeist of 'slow adventure'. We will aim to answer the following questions: What does slow adventure mean in practice? How does re-thinking our relationship with time have the potential to add value in both process and outcome? How does time perform when we use different lenses such as embodied time or more than human time?

This workshop is exploring time as a phenomenon and will be underpinned by the work of Heidigger and Husserl amongst others.

We will collectively explore ways we can work with time in our personal practice and various learner contexts.

Aimed at all

HOST: Myles Farnbank

Myles is a lecturer in Outdoor Leadership at the University of Cumbria, Ambleside, and brings to the world of academia a vast breadth of experience canoeing and paddlesport, gained through coaching, expeditions, boat building, and syllabus composition with leading paddlesport governing bodies.



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RIGHTS, RISKS AND RELATIONSHIPS: A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO OUTDOOR LEARNING

This session explores how children's and adults' rights can be the foundation for psychologically safe, challenging outdoor learning. Drawing on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and human rights principles, it will look at how to provide safe, equitable, supportive spaces where peoples' rights are upheld and there is a culture where everyone can enjoy and thrive in and through outdoor learning. This participatory session will explore:

- What is a rights-based approach, and what looks like one but may fall short of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- The right to play, development and "appropriate risk" versus the right to protection from harm.
- Rights to non-discrimination, inclusion and access to nature; who is missing from our programmes and why?

HOST: Neal Anderson

Neal Anderson is the Chief Executive Officer of Safe Sport International (SSI) with over 25 years of experience safeguarding the wellbeing and mental health of individuals involved in sports and outdoor activities. He is committed to developing robust safe sport standards and guidance, with significant experience in professional standards development across outdoor and adventure sports, leadership training & development, and applied research in therapeutic use of nature and outdoor sports and activities. Neal is an IOL Professional in Outdoor Learning, UKCP Registered Psychotherapist, Associate Lecturer with Cumbria University and was the IOL Professional Standards Manager for many years. He represents SSI on advisory groups of the International Safeguards for Children in Sport, the Centre for Sport and Human Rights, and the Global Observatory for Gender Equality in Sport.

INDOOR OUTDOOR LEARNING IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

This workshop will explore how to integrate outdoor learning experiences into classroom teaching so that the best can be made of these opportunities. It will introduce the indoor/outdoor framework for teaching curriculum content using outdoor learning that is fully integrated with indoor learning.

Aimed at entry and practitioner levels

HOSTS: Dawn Thomas

Dawn has run Nature Days, curriculum based outdoor learning consultancy and provision, for over 20 years. She is also an author of the recently published book Learning Indoors and Out in the Primary School.



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NORDIC WALKING FOR THE FELLS

Many (most?) people use poles incorrectly - however poles used properly can make a huge difference to your efficiency, the longevity of your day and enhance your fitness for the fells. The Nordic Walking technique is an artform - the art of efficient movement and power whilst staying relaxed, with free and fluid movement over the ground with 4 legs. This workshop will introduce the techniques, tools and tips to pass on to clients, helping to alleviate anxiety and enhance movement.

Aimed at all levels

HOST: Nicky Merrett

Nicky Merrett founded "Hiking Highs" and formerly "Nic's Nordic Walks" in 2015, to deliver guided walking breaks, inspire folk in the Lake District Mountains and share her passion for hills. Using poles in the fells and also teaching their magic is Nicky's passion, alongside navigation, to those keen to develop their skills in the hills.

As an accomplished Nordic Walking Coach, accredited with [British Nordic Walking](#), for hiking and distance events, Nicky has now taught over 1000 people to use poles efficiently for the fells. Nicky found her clients were keen to explore the higher fells, so took the next step to qualify as a Mountain Leader in 2018, and guides clients onto the fells on a regular basis alongside teaching beginners to advanced navigation through the NNAS scheme.

NATURE AND THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

We all know that time in nature feels good for our bodies and brains, but why is that? Why is that not true for everyone? How can we maximise the effect that nature has on our systems? With a little bit of theory and a little bit of time to play and chat with others; participants will discover how exposure to natural environments can reduce stress, improve mood, and promote overall health. We will delve into the science behind the nervous system and biophilia—the innate human affinity for nature—and examine how our nervous system responds to various natural stimuli as we unpack the wild apothecary of nervous system impacts. Through hands-on activities and immersive nature experiences this workshop will offer valuable insights and practical tools to integrate nature into everyday life.

Aimed at all

HOST: Lily Horseman

Lily has worked with people in nature for more than 20 years and loves to nerd out about stuff. She is an experienced Forest School Trainer and practitioner and runs Kindling Play and Training which was launched in 2009. She delivers community based work through Stomping Ground CIC and EdenVentures. Lily is also a Director and former Chair of the Forest School Association.



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YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS AND THE IMPACT ON ENGAGEMENT WITH LEARNING, THROUGH OUTDOOR LEARNING

A presentation of research that offers a new perspective on teacher-student relationships in the context of English Secondary Education. The presentation will explain why young people state they require positive teacher-student relationships before they will endeavour to engage with learning and discuss why they feel the outdoors offers an effective environment for positive teacher-student relationships to be built. Practical implications of the research are given to show how outdoor learning can provide an appropriate learning environment for young people's requirements to be met so they feel able to form positive relationships with teachers that encourages them to engage with learning. A key dimensions framework, created from the research findings, identifies young people's requirements to recommend how the findings can be interpreted and used in developing educational policies and as part of educational practice, to build positive teacher-student relationships and thus support engagement with learning.

Aimed at all levels but of particular interest for practitioner and senior level in terms of implementation for practice

HOST: Rebecca Hordern

Rebecca has recently completed her PhD in outdoor learning and education. She is passionate about aligning academic research and practice to create opportunities for young people to gain access to outdoor learning. With over 17 year's experience as a teacher and 25 year's experience of the outdoors, she has taught and led campcraft, Duke of Edinburgh Awards, hiking skills and overseas expeditions.

MAKING A MALLET

With a forest school focus, we would enable participants to make a wooden mallet. Participants should be happy to use saws and knives.

Aimed at entry and practitioner levels

HOSTS: Sarah Coates and Katy Dowdall

Sarah Coates and Katy Dowdall work at Castlehead, one of the Field Studies Council's centres.



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UNDERSTANDING SCHOOLS: BARRIERS, PRESSURES & OUTDOOR PRACTITIONER SOLUTIONS

A lively, discussion-led seminar exploring the realities outdoor practitioners face when working with schools — and the hidden pressures schools are under. We'll unpack common barriers (teacher anxiety outdoors, behaviour expectations, time pressures, risk concerns, curriculum misunderstandings) and explore practical ways practitioners can create frictionless, successful experiences for both pupils and staff. Participants will share experiences, identify recurring challenges and leave with clear strategies to support school groups with confidence.

Aimed at Practitioner level (also suitable for senior staff)

HOST: Carol Murdoch

Carol is the director of Love Outdoor Learning, supporting schools and outdoor practitioners across the UK to deliver practical, inclusive and accessible outdoor learning. She specialises in curriculum-linked delivery, neurodiversity-informed practice, nature-based pedagogy and high-impact activities that work in any environment.

THE OUTDOOR LEARNING TOOLKIT: 30/30/30 — MATHS, LITERACY & NATURE PROBLEM-SOLVING

A dynamic, fully outdoor workshop structured into three 30-minute bursts exploring how nature-rich spaces can support quick, low-prep approaches to maths, literacy and problem-solving. Participants will experience adaptable models that help build confidence for those newer to outdoor learning, offer fresh ideas for experienced practitioners and provide leaders with approaches that can enhance programme design and curriculum alignment across teams. The session concludes with groups creating their own blended activity suitable for school groups, families, youth programmes or community sessions. No kit required.

Aimed at all

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LEADERSHIP AND FACILITATION OF OUTDOOR LEARNING: ESTABLISHING HIGH QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS WITH NEW GROUPS IN TIME CONSTRAINED ENVIRONMENTS

The aim of this workshop is to provide practitioners, both new and experienced, with a basic framework for how they can consider establishing high quality relationships quickly when leading outdoor learning sessions. The workshop applies the findings of a PhD research project that evaluated the experiences of leaders working in the fields of outdoor and adventure. This session will provide a framework for consideration of your own emerging or established professional practice to enable you to critical reflect on the quality of your delivery.

Aimed at new and experienced practitioners, students and managers who are looking to consider alternative ways to develop the quality of their professional practice in outdoor learning.

HOST: Dr Jason King

Jason is Senior Lecturer in Physical Education and Outdoor Adventure at Leeds Beckett University. Jason has been working in the outdoor industry in a number of roles for the last 25 years with his PhD focusing on the role of leadership in unpredictable environments. As a pracademic he particularly likes looking at how practice can be developed between leaders and followers for high quality relationships and outcomes.

BUILDING BETTER TEAMS: A PRACTITIONER DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

This workshop provides a concise introduction to the skills required for outdoor educators to facilitate effective team development sessions. It serves as a taster of a more comprehensive two-day programme.

The session is highly interactive: you will participate in a short group activity and contribute to a debrief discussion. We will then transition to exploring some of the core skills essential for leading impactful team development activities.

Participants will leave with a **clearer understanding of the practitioner's role** in team development and **specific, practical ideas** for immediate application within your own practice. Details of the full two-day course will be available for those wishing to really explore this topic in more detail.

Aimed at entry/practitioner levels

HOST: Sam Lee

Sam is a teaching fellow in outdoor & experiential learning at the University of Leeds. He also runs a small experiential learning consultancy helping organisations to develop learning programmes that are more active and interactive.

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WALKING BACK TO WELLBEING: HOW NATURE-BASED WALKING SUPPORTS HEALTH & REDUCES BURNOUT IN WORKING PARENTS

This practical, research-informed workshop explores how walking in nature can support mental wellbeing and reduce burnout risk, drawing on findings from my Master's research with full-time working parents. Participants will experience a guided reflective walk, learn simple evidence-based techniques for enhancing nature connection, and discuss how these approaches can be applied in outdoor learning, wellbeing programmes, and workplace support. The session blends academic insight, experiential practice, and group reflection.

Aimed at practitioner level

Ideal for outdoor practitioners, educators, wellbeing facilitators, and leaders looking to apply nature-based approaches to mental health and burnout prevention. Also accessible for motivated entry-level attendees with an interest in nature connection and wellbeing.

HOST: Jay Worthy

Jay holds two Master's degrees - in Human Performance Physiology (Brunel) and Outdoor Wellbeing (University of Wales Trinity St David). Formerly CEO of a \$1B company, he experienced major burnout and recovered through the restorative power of nature. He now combines his research with lived experience to support others in using the outdoors for mental resilience and burnout prevention.

SYSTEMIC COACHING AND CONSTELLATIONS

What's all this about?

Experience a very simple exercise to assist teams in exploring their connections - not those in the room at the IOL conference but those in your world.

Imagine building a physical map of your world and then inviting someone else to visit it, ask questions and see where your mind goes.

This is an extremely simple method that can be adapted to be used in the outdoors and you don't even need the materials we will use.

It is a practical session using physical wooden pieces to build maps of your territory or situation and practise some simple coaching skills.

Aimed at practitioner and senior levels

HOST: Richard Tarran

Richard is a senior executive coach, Master NLP Practitioner, APIOL and a former Mountain Leader now focusing more on Sea Kayaking. He delivers coaching and personal development interventions for NATO, NHS, and a broad range of commercial sectors.

richard@rangeadvantage.com

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LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES

This workshop will include a brief update from Mountain Training and then introduce its new e-module on leader responsibilities. All adventure practitioners need to understand their legal and moral responsibilities when leading others in risk or adventurous activities. This workshop will summarise the content of the e-module which has been extensively researched and legally scrutinized. It will introduce the concept of duty of care and the principles of good practice. This is essential knowledge for all those entering the adventure sector to understand what they are getting into. It is also very useful for managers who need to ensure that their staff, volunteers and operations comply with the regulatory and professional standards expected of them.

Aimed all

HOST: Guy Jarvis

Guy is Executive officer at Mountain Training England

IMPROV AS PEDAGOGY

As someone who previously avoided improv, I never would have guessed it would have one of the biggest influences on my teaching practice. To be clear, this improv is not theatrical or comedic. It is, however, practical and approachable. We will use the principles of improv to help educators stay present, adaptable, and comfortable in the face of the unknown. As practitioners, we constantly improvise when lessons go off script, but our instincts pull us back to rigid learning objectives. It takes skill to say "yes, and..." to a student's curiosity; and like any skill, this takes practice. This workshop will help educators do precisely that.

Aimed at all

HOST: Brie Wintz

I'm Brie! Coming from Minnesota in the United States, I have a particular affinity for lakes and cold weather. I started as a biology teacher before switching to environmental education at a residential ELC. Now, I am finishing my Masters degree in Edinburgh!





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WILDERNESS THERAPEUTIC APPROACHES AND INTERVENTIONS - LEVEL 2 TRAINING PROGRAMS

With the growing focus on wellbeing and mental health outdoors, and the increasing demand for nature-based interventions, we are excited to share some examples of the work we have been doing and have a look at how the eQe Outdoors level 2 training programs and wilderness therapeutic interventions are having a positive impact on school children across the Greater Manchester area.

During this talk...over a brew and some biscuits!!

We will share how this NCFE accredited level 2 qualification, designed for school staff is comprehensive in its content and is creating sustainable opportunities for school children to not only engage with nature (in some cases for the first time), but to also reap the long-term benefits of being involved in a therapeutic intervention.

We will also demonstrate how our intervention programs are designed, structured and delivered in an explicitly therapeutic way with defined outcomes and objectives for each child. To bring this to life we will discuss some case studies of (anonymised) individuals / groups we have worked with over the past 2 years around the Salford area, their journey through a wilderness therapeutic intervention, and what the impact was (both measured and anecdotal).

Aimed at all

HOST: Michelle Wilcock

Michelle is a Level 3 Advanced Wilderness Therapeutic Practitioner, trained by eQe Outdoors. Her journey is unique with a background predominantly in Football (playing, coaching, coach education, mentoring...at various levels of the game in England and abroad) She runs a football club/charity for people with Cerebral palsy and acquired brain injury. She has been involved in outdoor learning and nature based therapeutic provision for the past 6 years and delivers the Level 2 in Wilderness therapeutic approaches and interventions for eQe as part of her practitioner role, as well as running her own CIC Dreamcatcher Outdoors. She is passionate about inclusion, all things nature/the environment, people development and creating environments that support people to become the best they can be



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DEVELOPING COLLABORATION THROUGH FRICTION FIRE

Using the bowdrill as the focus for the session, delegates will be encouraged to think deeper about the task at hand. Rather than seeing friction fire for its surface level appearance, they will be looking out for over-arching skills, knowledge and connection that a single experience can develop such as collaborative problem solving, listening skills, scientific enquiry and detailed observation/questioning. The intention is for participants to transfer this critical analysis into their own outdoor learning provision to enhance and enrich.

Aimed at practitioners

HOST: David Pegg

David has been delivering bushcraft and wilderness living skills in schools and to adults/professionals for nearly 15 years. What he finds most exciting is the deep learning that lies below the surface.

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