



Let's connect!



NEWSLETTER

February 2026 No.1



Horizons 112 is due out any day!
Take a look at the contents to see what's in this new issue...



CONTENTS

SCANNING THE HORIZON
Find out all the latest news from around the Institute for Outdoor Learning.
PAGE 4-7

SPOTLIGHT
This issue, we're shining a light on government engagement!
PAGE 8

ASPIRING LEADERS
Learn all about the Aspiring Leaders programme with Health Secretary.
PAGE 10-11

WHY CHOOSE YOUTH WORK?
Find out how you can bring youth work into your own practice.
PAGE 12-16

LESSONS FROM TRAGEDY
Sam Hurre reflects on what we might learn from the Howarth Forest post-forest tragedy.
PAGE 15-17

BUSHCRAFT MASTERY
Adam Logan reflects on his experience of bushcraft in his new role.
PAGE 18-19

IOL CONFERENCE REFLECTIONS
Find out all about the Institute for Outdoor Learning International Conference 2025.
PAGE 20-22

ANOTHER ADVENTURE!
Read on for another adventure with Niddale High School!
PAGE 23-24

WHAT'S THE GOAL?
How much do you know about the team goal in the Duke of Edinburgh Award?
PAGE 25-27

THE LANGUAGE OF BUSHCRAFT (2/2)
James O'Connell's series on bushcraft continues, with lessons learned from the Ardennes.
PAGE 30-31

THE POWER OF TRANSITIONAL OBJECTS
Lachlan van Oosteren's series on alternative problem-solving continues with a fascinating look at transitional objects.
PAGE 28-29

FOLKLORE, THE OUTDOORS AND MASCULINITY
Luke Blackburn explores how the Green Man might bring an array of possibilities in outdoor spaces.
PAGE 32-34

GO WITH THE FLOW
Corm Thomas continues our series on curriculum based outdoor learning by taking a look at which activities we can use to teach around the water cycle.
PAGE 35-36

SILHOUETTES AND SHAPES
Deborah Dale continues her series on outdoor identification by highlighting winter tree ID.
PAGE 37-39

IN PROFILE
This issue, we spoke to Sally Fowler and Emma Vethel about their experiences as freelance outdoor educators.

SAVE THE DATE! IOL Freelancer and Sole Trader Online Forum Event



25th March 2026. 9.30am to 12.30 pm

An online CPD event where Outdoor Learning Freelancers and Soletraders can access business support, gain career development information, share quality OL practice, problem solve on issues specific to their work, and consider their own self care.

- Aimed at members who work on a self employed freelance basis or are sole traders

Just £5 to register for IOL Members. £95 non members. We are finalising the details so **bookings will open soon.**

IOL AGM 2026 online 19th May at 7pm.



Please come and join us as we look forward to the next year of IOL. Register for free **here....**

IOL Bushcraft Spring Conference 2026

Fri 27th Feb to Sun 1st Mar
at Danemead Scout Camp,
Broxbourne, Herts.



Full Conference bookings includes 2 nights camping and all meals

- IOL Members £156
- FSA Members £173
- Non Members £237
- Full Conference optional **upgrade to 2 nights indoor accom £24**

Single Days (including meals)

- IOL Members Saturday £92
- IOL Members Sunday £64
- Non Members Saturday £132
- Non Members Sunday £105

There is still time to book so...

BOOK NOW



Workshop topics

- Outdoor First Aid
- Besom Brooms
- Woodland Toys
- Pendant Carving
- Pyrite Fire & Tinder Fungi
- Fish Leather Tanning & Pouch Making
- Willow Weaving – swallow
- Willow Weaving - bird feeder
- How to market your outdoor provision
- Feathered Game Preparation and Cooking
- Tracking and Tracking Stick
- Fairy Baskets
- Building Resilience in Nature
- Green and Blue Spaces for Mental Health
- Deep preparation for eating
- Wood Branding
- Oven Game: Feeding a Crowd with Fire



A CPD day for Outdoor Learning Professionals and Practitioners

Thursday 19th Feb, 2026 at High Ashurst, Dorking, Surrey.

An inspiring and exciting day of CPD for outdoor learning professionals aimed at all levels and experience of practitioner. Practical and theoretical workshops to develop your skills, knowledge and understanding.

The event is being hosted and subsidised by IOL, AHOEC & Surrey Outdoor Learning and Development (SOLD).

[Download the brochure](#)



[Bookings close 10am Mon 9th Feb](#)

£ Delegate fee £55.
Camper van/camping 18th Feb is free

BOOK NOW >>

A taste for adventure

"Outdoor adventure and residential activities are not a luxury—they are an essential part of learning and development", says Sean Day, Chief Executive at The Lake District Calvert Trust.

Outdoor activities teach essential skills, resilience, independence, and they provide a connection to nature. For young people with SEND, these experiences can shape aspirations and open doors to a more confident and fulfilling future. Adventure should never be limited by ability.

With the right support, the outdoors belongs to everyone. Residential outdoor experiences can be the most memorable and impactful experiences in a young person's life. "Before the trip, some of our pupils had never stayed away from home," recalls Sarah, a SENCO at a Lancashire special school. "By the end of the week, they were zip-lining and canoeing. The confidence boost was incredible." [Read more...](#)



Photos from Calvert Lakes

IOL Bushcraft Awards

For details see:

- [Bushcraft Awards web page](#)
- [BCC web page](#)

Are you ready for your BCC assessment?

Upcoming dates:

- 23 April, Jack Raven Camp, Kent. [Book here](#)
- 30 Sept, Jack Raven Camp, Kent. [Book here](#)



UPDATE - Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel

During January 2026, OEAP revised four National Guidance documents and made minor amendments to four others.



They added twenty new Welsh translations of existing guidance documents, revised two existing documents and made minor amendments to four others.

You can find links to the documents in the table of amendments. [Read more...](#)

A Bundle of Winter Wrens

A really interesting article about wrens - the tiny, charming birds we all know.



These diminutive brown birds make a habit of hopping about the undergrowth in stop-motion fashion, feeding on insects, spiders, and occasionally berries and seeds. Despite being the UK's most numerous breeding bird, they can be inconspicuous. [Read more...](#)

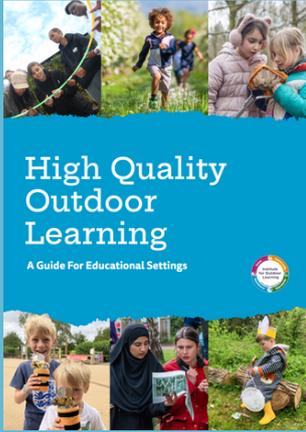
Swift bricks to be installed on all new buildings in Scotland as MSPs back law



The rest of UK has resisted calls to make builders install bricks that provide nesting for swifts and other endangered birds. The swift move contrasts with the four-year battle to bring the hollow £35 bricks into law in England. Campaigner, Hannah Bourne-Taylor said, "Come on Labour – you can't offer some toothless guidance that won't be followed to the scale needed, telling us it's not possible to mandate swift bricks when Scotland's just passed the law straight away." [Read more...](#)

Schools can apply for trial which tests impact of adventure learning

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) funded trial will look at the impact of outdoor learning on secondary school pupils. The independent evaluation will assess The Outward Bound Trust's Adventure and Challenge Programme across 66 state-funded secondary schools in England. [Read more...](#)



High Quality Outdoor Learning - a new Guide for Educational Settings

A guide for educational settings was launched at the IOL International Conference in November.

We are preparing printed hard copies which you will be able to order online.

Contact us to register your interest. Price tbc.



Free to download from the IOL website
Use this QR

Find your new team on the IOL JobSite

The IOL JobSite

The premier website for outdoor learning job vacancies

- SUPPORTING the outdoor learning sector
- SIGNPOSTING for job seekers
- Helping to FILL WORKFORCE vacancies with FREE ADVERTS for organisational IOL Members, and affordable rates for non-members
- Job adverts on the IOL JobSite are SEARCHABLE by category, region, contract type and salary

JOIN US www.outdoor-learning.org/workforce/job-listing.html



THE IOL FREE WEBINAR PROGRAMME

2 FREE WEBINARS
16 have been hosted so far
and the final 2 are coming up!

Feedback from a recent webinar participant....



"As a relatively new member of IOL I'd not done one of their webinars yet, so this was a fantastic introduction to what they offer members."

Book now! The final two in the programme are:

● **Mental Health First Aid - Recognising and supporting mental health distress on activities**
Introduces the F.I.R.S.T. mental health incident procedure — a simple, structured approach designed to help outdoor professionals respond confidently and compassionately to participants showing signs of mental distress. Thursday 19th February at 10am
[Info & BOOKINGS!](#)

● **Seeing the Forest for the Degrees**
Integrating the principles of forest school and outdoor learning in tertiary education. As tertiary education moves away from the traditional lecture format, Lucy Thornton and Ely Blyth of the SRUC's Wildlife and Conservation Team explore the opportunities of integrating forest school and outdoor learning principles in degree and further education provision. Tuesday 3rd March at 4pm
[Info & BOOKINGS!](#)

FREE webinars for IOL Members

Knowledgeable hosts from across the outdoor learning sector

BOOK NOW ➔

Winter/Spring Webinar Programme 2025/26
FREE for Members
Non IOL Members £35*
(*£37 after January 1st 2026)

SEE THE FULL PROGRAMME + BOOK HERE
<https://www.outdoor-learning.org/news-events/ems-event-calendar.html>

Engaging and informing outdoor professionals

The Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL)
Warwick Mill Business Centre, Warwick Bridge, Carlisle,
Cumbria, CA4 8RR
+44 (0)1228 564580 institute@outdoor-learning.org



Who to contact at IOL

- Jo Barnett, CEO
- Richard Retallick Business & Operations Manager
- Dave Brooks Membership
- Fiona Exon Job Adverts & Events
- Steve Ulyart IT & Accounts payable