

HORIZONS

THE OUTDOOR LEARNING MAGAZINE



ISSUE 103 AUTUMN 2023

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HORIZONS

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Learn about IOL and how to become a member: www.outdoor-learning.org.

EDITORIAL

And just like that we're coming to the end of 2023...the leaves are slowly changing colour and dropping from their branches and the wind is carrying a gentle chill. I'm glad to say that we've got another packed issue for you, so grab a hot drink and settle in.

We've got some great updates on policy and politics - Graham French kicks things off with an update on outdoor learning in Wales and the progress of the Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill (p.9). We've got Anita Kerwin-Nye offering her experiences on shaping and shifting policy (p.11) and an update on the development of the brand new outdoor learning institute in France (p.23). There's also plenty of updates from the recent IOL Conference (p.18) and a feature from conference workshop facilitator Charlotte Boenigk and Richard Whall on parkour in outdoor learning (p.14). I also thoroughly enjoyed Naimah's story on how she furthered her skills outdoors by working with the Ashton Youth Club and Lindley Trust (p.13).

Siân Brewer takes us inside the leadership team of Love Her Wild's Outdoor Academy (p.24), while Jim Whittaker gets us up to speed on all things outdoor learning apprenticeships (p.30). Dave Hills and Chris North continue their series on artificial intelligence, this time taking a closer look at image generation and how it may impact outdoor learning - including how it represents outdoor learning. Lizzy Maskey kicks off a new foraging series with a brilliant way to use hogweed seeds (p.34), before our latest In Profile rounds off the issue - this time, we spoke to Kate O'Brien, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Strategic Lead with Outward Bound, among other things! (p.36)

Enjoy the issue and enjoy all of the beauty that autumn has to offer!



EDITOR
CATHERINE DUNN

Catherine is an award winning filmmaker and creative. Her work primarily looks at mental health, adventure and the climate crisis. She holds an Outdoor Education MSc.

We want to hear from you! If you're interested in contributing to Horizons or have a story you think we should be covering, then get in touch - email the Editor at horizonseditor@outdoor-learning.org





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SCANNING THE HORIZON

NEWS FROM AROUND THE INSTITUTE FOR OUTDOOR LEARNING

A word from Jo

There is much in this Horizons about the IOL Annual Conference 2023 (see page 18) which has been a new and experimental offer for our members and the wider outdoor learning global community, and I do thank all those that supported us with the online event. Behind the scenes we have taken time to refocus with the IOL's charitable purpose of championing outdoor learning in four key ways: Voice, Community, Workforce and Standards. The establishment of the outdoor learning 'Round Table' with representation from our Geographical and Sector Specialist Groups is key to developing the work of the charity in line with member priorities, while the Trustees Board are responsible for legal governance. Check out what exciting events we have coming up below!

In-Person Events

The IOL is continuing to develop its dual offer of both online and in-person events. Please look out for both Sector Specialist Group events, beginning with the Bushcraft Conference in November and Adventure For All in December, and the Geographical Groups kicking off with the North-West England conference in January. We also have a professional opportunity available through the Train-the Trainer course at Plas y Brenin on 13th-16th January (more information on page 6). Details of all these in-person events can be found here in Horizons, on the IOL website and in the IOL Newsletter, as well as through Groups.IO emails.



IOL Webinar Series

The full programme will be published very soon alongside the launch of our new website, with the series of online workshops being held from January to May 2024. As with the conference workshops, we will bring together both breadth and depth from across the outdoor learning sector. These are free to members and open to non-members for a small fee. They are another way to network, share and develop practice ▲

The work and role of the UK All Party Parliamentary Group for Outdoor Learning

All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) are informal cross-party groups that have no official status within Parliament. They are run by and for Members of the Commons and Lords, though many choose to involve individuals and organisations from outside Parliament in their administration and activities. This does mean membership of an APPG is volitional by MPs – they are genuinely interested in the published purpose, and this may well be linked to the interests expressed by their constituents. The purpose of the APPG for Outdoor Learning is to provide a platform and focus for the various representative organisations involved in the outdoor learning sector; to encourage their access to Westminster based parliamentarians, and to enable collaboration and discussion. The IOL is the official Secretariat to the Group, which it supports, informs and responds to requests from the MPs.

Identifying 'key and current' outdoor learning outcomes is helpful in Westminster, as well as highlighting the tradition and heritage of outdoor learning in the UK. MPs in the APPG are keen to undertake fact-finding meetings across the UK to better understand outdoor learning and its opportunities and challenges. To support this, the Chair, Robin Millar, asked for a digital map so an MP could find out about outdoor learning in their constituency. The IOL was also asked to prepare an A6 briefing card on the benefits and impact of outdoor learning to be shared with all MPs, with a QR code that links to the digital map (QR code pictured).



To open the map use the QR Code reader or the [link](#). There are map legends of MP Constituencies, Providers and the Leading Practitioners. Click on any of the markers and it will take you to their contact details. Providers shown on the map do not have to be members of the IOL but are required to sign up to the [IOL Code of Conduct](#). The A6 card will be distributed to all those marked on the map, for reference and support with any interaction with the local MP ▲

To be added to the map please email: institute@outdoor-learning.org



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Train the Trainer Course for Delivering Experiential Learning in the Outdoors

IOLE are pleased to announce dates of a Train the Trainer course for members wishing to deliver the new Institute for Outdoor Learning Continuous Professional Development (CPD) offering 'Delivering Experiential Learning in the Outdoors'. This CPD course was described in detail in the Spring 2023 issue of Horizons. It comprises three modules, all of which are experiential, and person-centred in approach. Module 1, 'Facilitation', offers participants opportunities to hone their skills and refine their approach to making learning easy for their clients. Module 2, 'Fostering a Connection', allows participants to explore how they might use games, quizzes, storytelling and a host of other activities to foster their clients' connection to the world around them and in so doing hopefully improve the health and wellbeing of both their clients and the planet. Lastly, Module 3, 'Reflective Practice for Outdoor Learning Providers', explores a fun approach to reflective practice that aims to make life and work easier and more enjoyable. All three modules are recognised as CPD for members of the Mountain Training Association and of the Association of Mountaineering Instructors.

The Train the Trainer course is also experiential and person-focused, in-keeping with the ethos of the modules it prepares you to deliver. Participants will have the chance to experience all three CPD modules (Facilitation, Fostering a Connection, and Reflective Practice for Outdoor Learning Providers) before discussing delivery models, exploring resources, and planning next steps. There will be plenty of time for questions and discussion too.

Applicants for the Train the Trainer course should be able to demonstrate a commitment to delivering outdoor learning experientially and have had experience of training others. If you are interested in attending, please contact richard@outdoor-learning.org for more details and an application form.



After completing the course, each participant will be assigned a supervisor to support them in planning and reviewing their first course. The cost of supervision is included in the price of the course.

Course information

- Course Dates: 09.00 January 13th to 16.00 January 16th, 2024
- Venue: Plas Y Brenin National Outdoor Centre, Capel Curig, LL24 0ET
- This course is non-residential. Plas Y Brenin may be able to offer B&B if they have space. Please contact them directly (early booking of accommodation is recommended)
- Teas, coffees, lunches, and snacks provided
- Non-discounted price: £332 per person (includes supervision costs described above)
- Early bird booking price: £282 (includes supervision costs described above)
- Places limited to 10 participants (there are 6 places left at time of publication). A minimum of 8 people are required for the course to run ▲

Forest Education Network, England - Increasing outdoor learning opportunities for young people

By Sarah Wood – National Learning Manager at Forestry England

Woods and forests are at the heart of people's relationship with the outdoors. Whether visiting a local green space or a major forest visitor centre, trees have a huge impact on our health and wellbeing. They can spark our imaginations, pose excitement and opportunities, and sometimes trepidation, no matter what our age.

Earlier this year, the Forest Education Network England (FENE) secured funding to train more outdoor practitioners in forest education. FENE is a group of like-minded individuals from a variety of organisations who advocate and champion the importance of forest education. Co-chairs Becky Wilkinson (Royal Forestry Society) and I successfully managed to pool the network's wealth of expertise together to create some new informative training videos and introduce 90 'newbies' to the joys of teaching outdoors in woodland settings.

The training places were snapped up in a matter of weeks and the short videos complement the training by acting as a little reminder of what was taught, answering some of the common questions those new to delivering forest education ask. These are available to any outdoor practitioner [here](#).

Those who took part in the training came from a range of backgrounds from early years practitioners to farmers. Initial feedback has been very positive and many acknowledged that without the funding they wouldn't have been able to undertake this type of training. Trainees are already putting what they learned into practice:

'I have applied some of the practical ideas with children, for example, the layers of woods'

'When we run community engagement sessions around new woodland creations, I now have a grab bag of activities to encourage interaction and conversation'

A thank you to our funders

This project was made possible thanks to two key areas of work being overseen by the Forestry Commission: the England Trees Action Plan - helping to meet their objectives of connecting more people with trees and woodlands - and the Forest Skills Forum - to increase the understanding and appreciation of forestry within schools. Also Cambium Sustainable who organised the delivery of the OCNs Level 2 Outdoor Learning Practitioner training course across nine different locations in England.

The [FENE webpages](#) (hosted by Royal Forestry Society) are home to some great forest education resources, and available to any outdoor learning practitioner ▲



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BE ADVENTURE SMART



Foreword by AdventureSmart Co-Project Lead, Paul Donovan

Our Mountain Rescue Teams (MRTs) often tell me that the main reasons for them being called out are for someone being lost, missing or overdue, which has led me to ponder how AdventureSmart can help. Until recently, the AdventureSmart messaging for venturing into the hills and mountains, supported by Mountain Rescue England & Wales, was to 'learn to use a map and compass before heading to the hills'. However, on reflection, it's become very obvious that such messaging isn't addressing a significant number of avoidable call-outs for MRTs. So the question is, what are the root causes of people getting lost or going missing? Potential factors include: overestimating people's ability; failure to understand a weather forecast or weather patterns; a lack of planning and research; poor appreciation of distance and poor observations; and poor or risky decision making due to stressful situations.

In collaborating with Mountain Rescue (MR), Mountain Training England (MTE), National Navigation Awards Scheme (NNAS) and other key partners within the AdventureSmart strategy, we have reviewed, adapted and adopted new messaging to assist in addressing these identified root causes to help keep people on track. As members of the IOL and practitioners who might find yourselves teaching navigation, I hope you can help cascade this new messaging amongst your networks, to address the highlighted root causes and consider alternative approaches to enable good decision-making.

Be AdventureSmart

Every year, thousands of people end up calling for help because they are lost and/or tired. It's important to know where you are and where you are going. Sticking to your chosen route is important but can be tricky; making good decisions based on some simple steps can keep your day on track.

Keep on Track

Getting lost isn't fun wherever you are – in the mountains and hills, on water, in towns or cities. Many people now use phone-based navigation, but carrying a paper map and knowing how to use it is important to ensure you stay on your chosen route. Learning to work with both digital and paper maps, whilst also lifting your head to observe your surroundings can greatly enhance your adventures. When we are in the 'great outdoors', using key features of the landscape can keep us on track; for example, the position of the sun in the sky to help us keep a sense of direction and time. Technology can be a great source of information for us while outdoors through maps and wildlife identification, so perhaps it's about striking a balance to ensure we don't miss out on what our wonderful landscape has to offer.

Familiarising yourself with the key map features and decision-making points of your route makes for a more relaxed time out, with less interruption.

Maps come in a variety of scales, each with a differing range of detail to suit our needs. Understanding scale will help you work out timings and distance, whilst aiding your interpretation of the landscape.

By looking up and keeping our senses tuned into the world around us, we will notice changes in the weather, become more aware of others who may be travelling faster or slower than us and we have a better sense of where we are. All of this ensures that we are better equipped to make good decisions and enjoy our day out!

Keep on Track has advice on preparation, how to orientate yourself with the map and the world around you and what to do if you are unsure of where you are (such as backtrack to your last known point and don't be tempted to take a short-cut across country).

We are about to go into the time of shorter daylight hours – so a great time to practice keeping on track, that's assuming you have positively answered the AdventureSmart 3 key questions: Am I confident I have the **KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS** for the day/night?; Do I know what the **WEATHER** will be like?; Do I have the right **GEAR**?

How about between this and the next issue of Horizons you set yourself a challenge: dust off a map and compass, and give your navigation skills a refresh; download all the relevant information you need to your phone, including OS Locate and your chosen route; fully charge your phone, pack it in a dry bag with a charged power bank and only use it as a means of confirming your location.

One simple compass skill to keep you on track

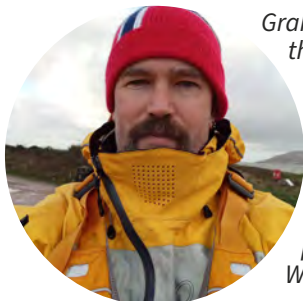
Using a compass at key decision points such as path junctions or at the summit of a hill/mountain will help you work out which direction you need to be heading in, especially when it's hard to see where you are going due to low cloud, mist, fog or nightfall. Here's our simple guide:

1. Before you set off, use a red pen to mark the north (top) edge of your map, download OS Locate and/or pack your compass.
2. Turn on OS Locate on your phone and switch to compass mode, then lay your phone or a real compass, if using one, anywhere on your map.
3. Ignore all the lines and numbers on the compass, simply align the red end of the compass needle (north pointing) to the top of the map (north edge, which you marked red before setting off). Remember RED to RED.
4. Keeping the map still, move your body around the map to look in the direction of the path you wish to follow.
5. Once you are sure of the path you need to follow, don't leave the path, stick to it!
6. Let us know how you get on!

Article written by Jo Barnett, Paul Donovan and Emma Edward-Jones

SPOTLIGHT

OUTDOOR LEARNING POLICY, ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING IN WALES



Graham French is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Education at Bangor University, Director of the Outdoor Activities PGCE course and chair of the North Wales region of AHOEC. In this article, Graham looks at the challenges of policy advocacy for outdoor learning Wales and the progress made in working with the Welsh Government and Senedd Cymru.

Curriculum development

Whilst adventurous activities have been part of the Curriculum for Wales since its previous incarnation in 2008, the latest edition, published in 2022, is now so different from its English counterpart that the concept of subject content is really not applicable in the same sense. The Curriculum for Wales 2022 was created in response to WG's review of the curriculum, conducted by Professor Graham Donaldson (the same person whose review of the curriculum in Scotland led to the Curriculum for Excellence). His review, titled 'Successful Futures' set out a number of recommendations for curriculum reform. WG adopted them all and embarked on a lengthy process of curriculum redesigning. Uniquely, they engaged a cross-section of schools from across the nation to do the designing and over a two-year period allowed schools to release key staff to meet regularly together to design a radically different curriculum that was centred on four purposes. These four purposes explicitly challenged the idea that the purpose of education was to leave school with as many GCSE grades

This article sets out to give you a brief introduction to the journey towards statutory outdoor education provision in Wales. It will also look at the associated challenges faced by researchers, practitioners and even policy makers in achieving meaningful change in the provision of outdoor learning experiences for the children and young people of Wales. It outlines two building blocks that contribute to this process of change, one of which is concerned with curriculum opportunities, whilst the other looks to bring legislative change through a member's bill in the Welsh Parliament (Senedd Cymru).

Wales first achieved a modicum of self-governance with the establishment of the Welsh Assembly and Welsh Assembly Government in 1999, as a result of a New Labour pledge when Blair and Brown resided in Downing Street. In the mid-2010s the assembly aspect of both the gathering of representatives and the government itself received further powers, meaning they could now legislate in devolved matters and, thus, they became the Welsh Parliament (more commonly known by its name in Welsh, Senedd Cymru) and the Welsh Government. From here on I will refer to the Senedd and Welsh Government (WG).

Devolution

When it comes to education, the first point of departure from Westminster governance lies in the National Curriculum, the government and the Education Minister; these are not the same in Wales. The way schools are organised and governed also differs in Wales. On the whole, schools are directly overseen by local authorities (except independent schools) and a few schools who have a bit more control of their budgets. There are, of course, independent schools too, but the vast majority of schools in Wales are accountable to their local authority and our inspectorate, Estyn (similar to OFSTED in England). There are no academies or free schools, and we haven't ever had SATS tests, league tables or the literacy hour. Our GCSE grades still run A* to G, and teacher assessment of progress was the norm even before Covid. These differences have an impact on how education policy is enacted, accountability, and the way that outdoor learning has interacted with the curriculum.

Four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales

"Supporting children and young people to be: Ambitious, capable learners who are ready to learn throughout their lives; Enterprising, creative contributors who are ready to play a full part in life and work; Ethical, well-informed citizens of Wales and the world; Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society"

A* - C as possible and instead placed value on developing active members of society who felt empowered to function and contribute.

As such, the curriculum was designed to be locally responsive and accept that whilst there were some things that really mattered in a subject or curriculum area, how these were explored was up to a school to match the needs of its children and resources, as well as being appropriate for its location and community. Subjects with significant cross-over in pedagogical approaches and knowledge bases were

grouped in Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs) and whilst this did not mean the end of traditional subjects (there are still GCSEs in these subjects), it was designed to foster a more holistic, cross-curricular approach more often seen in foundation learning. The Curriculum for Wales was available for consultation in January 2020 where many thousands of responses to the consultation were addressed and there were some significant changes – not least the inclusion of specific direction to utilise the outdoors to support learning in the humanities where children 'should be given opportunities to learn outside...'. Many outdoor learning organisations and concerned individuals submitted responses, and the Wales Council for Outdoor Learning had the opportunity to work directly with the civil servant facilitating the humanities AoLE development team of teachers. Thus, the Curriculum for Wales now allows a greater freedom of choice in curriculum design to teachers and presents opportunities to engage in outdoor learning. Where previously teachers may have found restrictions in prescriptive curriculum content and traditional pedagogies, there is now space and time to design outdoor learning into the curriculum for those that choose to. Of course, that presents training and development needs for teachers.

Although there are commercial providers offering high quality professional development, there are equally many free-to-access training programmes and resources, facilitated by bodies such as Natural Resources Wales (NRW). NRW has a team of education officers who run programmes of professional development for teachers and facilitate regional outdoor learning networks for teachers to meet regularly, share effective practice and gain support. NRW has an education aim as one of its core purposes. This has led to productive relationships with outdoor learning professional organisations, such as the Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres (AHOEC), enabling sustainable access to lakes, rivers, forests, crags, gorges and mines on its land for the purposes of education. A community-centred, free to low-cost approach to professional development in the outdoors has provided opportunities to support teachers as they exercise some of their new curriculum design freedom and venture further outside the classroom.

Legislative change

The second component of this journey to seek statutory outdoor learning in Wales runs parallel to the curriculum reforms detailed above. As I've already explained, Senedd Cymru has legislative powers in devolved matters and education is one of these devolved issues. There are 60 members of the Senedd and the small size and relative youth of devolution mean that members are more accessible than their colleagues in Westminster. Soon after our last (Senedd) election, Outdoor Alliance Wales (OAW), a collaboration of a wide range of organisations in the wider outdoor adventure sector (so not all/only concerned with education), was instrumental in the formation of a Senedd cross-party group (CPG) on outdoor adventure. This group, whilst similar to the APPG in Westminster (see Horizons #102 for more on the Westminster APPG) is open to people beyond Senedd members and gave further access to at least one Senedd member from the three major parties (Labour, Conservative and Plaid Cymru). The wide-ranging membership of this group, brought about through the advocacy work of OAW, has prompted opportunities to present to government ministers on climate change, access to open spaces (including water) and education. The Senedd members attending meetings were clearly concerned with the outdoors and, whilst they did not present a direct conduit to WG, they have allowed the wider outdoor adventure sector to inform other Senedd members (through them) and have questions asked on the floor of the Senedd in various debates.

Utilising this growing understanding of the wider outdoor adventure sector, we approached the chair of the CPG, Sam Rowlands (Member of the Senedd), with a proposal to put forward a members' bill on outdoor education which focussed on offering funded residential outdoor education courses for the children and young people of Wales. Recent research, commissioned by WG that I had the privilege to lead on, demonstrated that teachers valued learning outdoors and its impact on both the health and wellbeing of the children and staff, and the opportunities it presented to engage and motivate children. However, it also highlighted the lack of consistency in both quality and offering across the 22 local authorities of Wales. There were some early indications of a correlation between those local authorities with more of the most deprived areas (according to the Welsh index of multiple

deprivation) and it was clear that the financial cost of outdoor education residential work was one of the main hurdles faced by school leaders and teachers when embedding outdoor education in their curriculum.

The first step was to write an outline proposal which would enter a selection process with the range of other members' bill proposals, of which one would be selected to take forward and allocated Senedd researcher time and time for debate in the Senedd by members. The proposed Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill was selected from this process as the one idea that could be worked upon in the following month. We had little time to work on the next step – an explanatory memorandum which would inform members' decisions on whether to allow further parliamentary time and resources to develop a full bill. Thus, Sam Rowlands and I, alongside some of the Senedd research team, worked hard to prepare the memorandum with enough information for members, whilst trying to give leeway for the future development of the bill and maintaining progress already made. Colleagues from the Outdoor Education Advisory Panel (OEAP) Cymru, AHOEC and the OAW were integral in this process, in subsequent media work and in garnering organisational support for the bill. The OAW were vital in demonstrating the wide range and large number of organisations who supported the bill, demonstrating the power of a shared voice with many organisations coming together in the alliance.



The Senedd debated the proposed bill on the 26th October 2022 and then voted on whether to give Sam and the team leave to proceed (devoting more Senedd time and resources, both human and financial) to working the initial proposal and memorandum into a full bill which fit in the Welsh legal framework concerning education. The debate was available to view live online (and is still there as an archive) and it was pleasing to hear all the members who spoke recount strong and positive memories of their time as young people in the outdoors or on residential visits. During the debate it was clear that many members supported the idea of the proposed bill, but some in government felt that it was too costly to implement, so voted against it. However, the result of the debate and vote on the proposed bill was successful in gaining leave to proceed by one vote, and from that point there were a further 13 months to research further and develop the proposal into a full bill.

Once written, the bill itself needs to move through the committee phase, before a final debate and vote in the Senedd, hopefully early next year (2024). As the Outdoor education (Wales) Bill makes its way through the Senedd towards a final vote, the work with WG on outdoor learning continues. If the bill passes, this will ensure that financial circumstances are not a barrier to the children and young people of Wales benefiting from residential outdoor education as an integral part of the curriculum. If the bill doesn't pass, the profile of outdoor learning has still been raised so that many more teachers in Wales will seek out the resources (handily available through Hwb) to deliver high quality outdoor learning (as they can in their self-designed curriculum), presenting further opportunities for the children and young people of Wales to learn outdoors ▲

CHALLENGE OR OPPORTUNITY?

SHAPING THE WORLD THAT YOU WANT TO SEE



Anita Kerwin-Nye is a national leader on access to the outdoors and has led multiple at-scale outdoor learning programmes. Former Executive Director at the Youth Hostels Association (YHA), Anita established Access Unlimited – the coalition of National Parks and five leading outdoor learning charities – who ran the Defra and Heritage Fund 'Generation Green' programme. Connecting over 100,000 children and young people to a range of progressive outdoor learning experiences, the Generation Green legacy can be seen across protected landscapes and in residential provision. Anita's consultancy work focuses on shaping the future that we want to see - rather than letting funding and policy impact the mission.



We are at a crossroads in outdoor learning, but our collective capacity is stretched. As election year approaches – and many funders are reviewing their strategies – how do we create the world that we want to see?

It feels like Covid-19 has helped accelerate intellectual and emotional support across the board. Outward Bound's Let Us Out campaign is supporting a call for legislation across England, Wales and Scotland to make the outdoors an entitlement. The Institute for Outdoor Learning, Landscapes for Learning, Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, UK Youth, Access Unlimited, and community networks such as All the Elements, are continuing to raise the profile of outdoor learning and there is continued innovation on the ground. Young people have repeatedly highlighted how they value adventures away from home. Their passion for the environment is clear, but times are hard, so we need to take control of our own destiny to share a better future. So, what are the 5 key challenges we face? In this article I will identify key challenges, pose plenty of questions and offer my own experience in lobbying for change.

Influencing in the outdoor sector - five key policy areas

1. Our places and spaces

Capital costs are a major challenge. Costs of capital repairs – large and small – are escalating and there are difficulties in recruiting or contracting skilled teams. Girl Guiding, YHA and local providers are having to sell properties largely due to maintenance costs. The Youth Investment Fund was a fantastic and timely investment in youth spaces, but it didn't work for many residential centres despite residential experiences being such a vital part of youth work provision. Can Dormant Assets or strategic approaches to 'levelling up' prompt investment in outdoor learning buildings and spaces?

How can we help ourselves by looking at different models? At the YHA, this includes a franchise model where a local investor buys and runs the hostel working with the YHA brand and charity. Others are looking at how they share buildings, considering who needs to use them at complimentary times

of the week or year. But what can we learn from the wider charity sector? The National Council for Voluntary Organisations are in the early stages of work looking at capital needs across charities, including those in heritage, but also charity retail and local buildings used for administration. What might a shared lobby look like? Where might there be economies of scale in commissioning solutions? Or cost cutting through sharing spaces? Might there be one shared centre for best advice on capital solutions, especially for smaller charities without in-house property teams?

2. Developing our people

We know people have left the profession over recent years. Covid-19 showed the vulnerability and potential undervaluing of the sector. Indeed, many who trained in outdoor learning as part of their teacher training or youth work are now considering retirement. There is also a growing difference between generations. Young workers are less likely to see a career for life, as they look to balance home and work differently. Many young people are moving between roles and into 'portfolio' careers, with an increasing interest in value-based employment propositions around environment and social justice. How can we use these things to craft roles and opportunities that suit the next generation of outdoor learning leaders? We are perhaps uniquely placed to make them an offer that ticks all their boxes.

Take the Outdoor Citizens community, that the YHA is working with, which is made up of nearly 100 outdoor groups from a diverse range of backgrounds. Alongside support for outdoor learning training, this community is exploring training in finance, to support self-employment, and in social media, to share learning and get work – this approach is much more suited to the working lives of young people.

What about the overlap of skills? We know we need many of the skills that our colleagues in hospitality and tourism sectors need – catering, front of house, call centres, managing groups etc. Do we build these into our career paths and schemes? Could we share training? Do we need these skills at different times of year making it easy for people to move between roles? This is an area of interest for the Tourism team at the

Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), with early discussions between heritage, tourism and outdoor learning bodies ongoing.

3. Access for all

Inequity of access to the outdoors, to outdoor learning and to careers in the sector is well known, but we have had some real progress in recent years. However, the sector still has a broadly homogeneous set of senior leadership and trustees; it takes work to turn the dial on inclusive hiring practices. Where do we stand on anti-racism? On strategies for preventing misogyny and abuse? This is hard stuff. But without challenging prejudice and facing our own class-based prejudices, everything else is secondary.

Role models continue to matter. How do we make the most of brilliant champions across the outdoor sector – did you know Debbie North is the UK Government disability champion for the outdoors? Or have you seen the work of the Ordnance Survey Champions network? How do we tell different stories? YHA Outside Voices used graphic illustration and arts approaches to tell the stories of those often left out of the outdoor learning narratives. Perhaps we need to look to more creative approaches to storytelling.

4. Collaboration not competition

I am a consortium specialist; cause not competition. Collaboration will be the way to build a thriving post Covid-19 outdoor learning sector that's not just about economies of scale, but about playing to strengths and allowing young people to move between a range of progressive experiences. This was the model for Generation Green which had a range of potential opportunities across 15 different, but complimentary, providers.

We also lobby better together – reopening of residential centres post Covid-19 was a remarkable group effort. Funders like collaboration, but they rarely pay for the glue that holds consortia together. Part of the joint lobby must be how these partnerships are resourced. One emerging example is the Protected Landscapes Partnership – bringing together England, Wales and Northern Ireland's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, National Parks and National Trails into one programme of work funded by Defra.

Might this present an opportunity to consider the outdoor learning potential of these brilliant places differently? Similarly, the Royal Horticultural Society, Natural History Museum and Consortium launched the Department for Education's National Education Nature Park in October – an outdoor learning partnership with schools across the country.

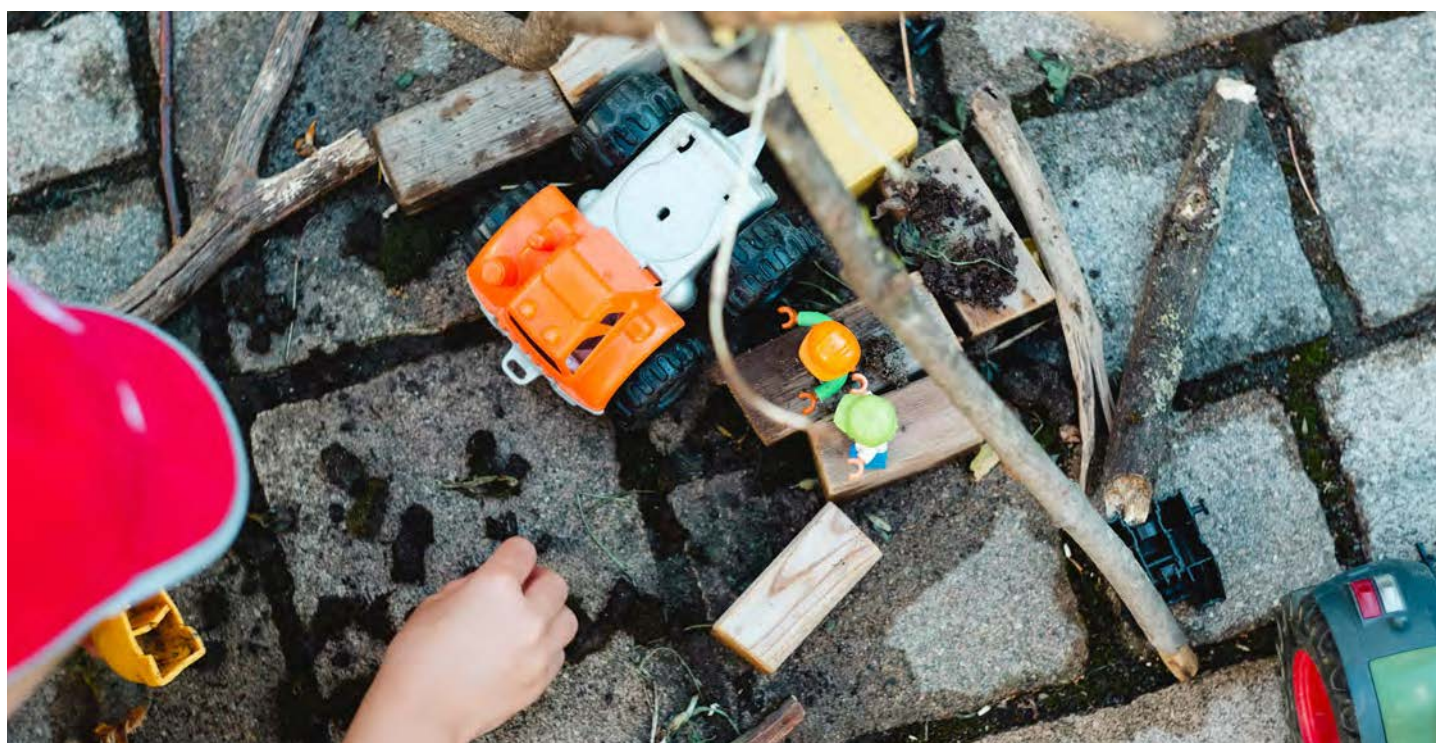
5. Show us the money

There will never be enough funding, but there is even less than normal, with a higher than ever cost base. So, the ideas above play an important part in making the most of what we have. But how do we influence funders? Do we lobby them like we might lobby government? Can we apply to sit on funding advisory committees? Do we sit on the funder trustee boards? Funders like Heritage, National Lottery, Esmée Fairbairn and Ernest Cook continue in our space, but the lobby on Dormant Assets needs to continue. There is a welcome focus on youth, but a reminder that the responses to the consultation placed outdoor learning high on the agenda. DCMS 'Adventures Away from Home' funding (second phase due out in November 2023) was welcomed. We await Defra thinking on access and the potential funding to make their commitment to a night under the stars a reality for every child. But funding and grants are only one part of the sustainability story.

The YHA traded most of its income, others receive membership and public donations. Town and Parish Councils are hidden gems for funding spaces, Scouts, Guides and thousands of other community groups who draw on volunteer time to bring outdoor learning to the many. For the future, new models are needed like Greenwood Academy Trust, who built their own campsite provision on school grounds. Affordable trips for all and a programme to skill staff to run them – that's shaping our own destiny.

Conclusion

The outdoors and outdoor learning are entitlements that this generation of young people, perhaps more than any that came before, needs access to. Those who work in this sector are resilient, resourceful and relentless. Let's use that to shape the future we want so that every child enters adulthood knowing the outdoors belongs to them ▲



NAIMAH'S STORY



Naimah, 19, is from Manchester and has just completed a gap year scheme with Ashton Youth Club. She went from being a young person to a full-time staff member and had funding for the year to put towards her personal development. She chose to participate in an Alpine Preparation Course! Keep reading to find out how it went.

I live in Ashton-under-Lyne, a majority ethnic area. There is a real stigma around outdoor adventures.

To put it simply it's not "normal", especially for a Muslim woman. However, my dad used to run holiday activities for local kids and dragged me and my siblings along with him camping and hiking. I can't say I liked the outdoors when I was younger. Fast forward a few years and I joined Ashton Youth Club, where I continued doing outdoor activities and eventually started to really enjoy being outdoors and couldn't wait for my next adventure.

I'm now working at Ashton Youth Club full-time on a year-long Gap Scheme with Lindley Educational Trust, generously funded by the Rank Foundation. Each individual on the Gap Scheme gets a bursary to put towards their own development. I chose to use my bursary to further my outdoor skills, experience and qualifications, resulting in some great adventures that included:

- A full-on mountaineering week in Scotland with the Martin Moran Foundation.
- 7-day winter mountaineering weeks with both Lindley's Ashton and Pitsmoor Youth Clubs.
- Attending a Climbing Wall Instructor (CWI) training course (I plan to do my assessment soon!).
- Completing my Duke of Edinburgh Gold award.
- Attending the Jonathan Conville Alpine Preparation Course.

One of the best adventures this year was the Jonathan Conville Alpine Preparation Course in Wales. What really pushed me to do this course was the realisation that I hadn't seen anyone in my local community or anyone my age attempt it before. It was down to me to apply for a place, there was no link to the Youth Club, and I wouldn't know anyone. This made it a bit daunting, but also made me super keen to go.

Day 1: Travel and Welcome

I offered to car-share with another successful applicant, which gave me the chance to get to know someone before the course started and ease into things. It also created a foundation for a friendship, and we helped each other a lot throughout the course. In our little group of four we had Libby Peters as our Mentor (she's a famous mountain guide!).

Day 2: Where the fun began!

Libby took our group rock climbing and taught people how to belay, manage ropes and taught us how to rig an abseil, which we then had to test out for real. This was good fun and a great way to remember how someone new to the outdoors would feel on their initial abseil. It also definitely made me aware of

the importance of good rigging, a good anchor and highlighting the dangers of what could go wrong.

We went on to do some lead climbing, focusing mainly on the placement of gear to protect the lead climber in the event of a fall. We climbed in pairs with one person leading, placing gear and the other belaying, and then changed over on a ledge.

Day 3: This was a big day out

All the training was put into practice on a longer multi-pitch climb. For someone who hasn't done much outdoor climbing, to go on to do a full multi-pitch trad climb was great. I was nervous to say the least. Everything went to plan and we successfully completed our climb! It was a huge adventure with big drops and we carefully selected foot and hand placements. I was in disbelief when we had reached the top of the climb, the view was so beautiful and I couldn't believe we had finished the pitch. Libby got us thinking about techniques for when you're with someone who may be a little nervous, how to protect and support them on the uneven ground to get off the top of the climb. We were also taught confidence in roping.

Having conquered our route, we wrapped up the trip with a well-deserved ice cream! Needless to say, the course was fantastic, and I learnt loads. I'm still so proud of how well we worked as a team and looked after each others' safety. Libby Peters inspired us all and was a great Mentor. I was the youngest, had the least experience and I've never been to the Alps. I didn't let that stop me and gave everything a really good go. I can proudly say I successfully completed everything and was the first one to do the abseil.

Next for me is to complete my CWI qualification. Looking back, the trip felt so surreal, and I will cherish it forever, it was such a good stepping-stone and gave me confidence to do more rock climbing! ▲



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PARKOUR IN OUTDOOR LEARNING



Richard Whall is a Senior Lecturer in Human Movement, teaching on the Sport, PE and Outdoors undergraduate courses at the University of Central Lancashire. Having previously worked across the health, fitness & education industry, he has combined his work and academic experiences, developing an interest in the physicality of learning from a scientific and philosophical perspective. This has led him to his current explorations of the concept of physical intelligence as a PhD project, and people's experiences of physical intelligence through various movement forms, including free-running.



Charlotte Boenigk is the founder of Esprit Concrete: FYI (formerly Free Your Instinct) who pioneered the use of parkour for mental health. Her Doctoral research at Leeds Beckett University seeks to understand the impact of parkour on mental health from an Ecological Dynamics perspective bringing the mental health benefits of nature based physical activity into the urban environment.

Introduction

Could, or should, parkour be considered as outdoor adventurous learning? Parkour is broadly defined as the act of overcoming obstacles to move as swiftly and directly as possible through the environment from point A to point B. Unfortunately, many people's first impressions of parkour are based on social media highlight reels or daring stunts in films where point A and/or B are rooftops or other precarious places. Therefore, parkour is often seen as crazy, reckless or antisocial, whereas, in reality, parkour is a discipline that values responsibility, self-awareness and respect. Indeed, parkour shares much more in common with outdoor adventurous learning than many people realise. The aim of this article is to provide a broader background to the origins of parkour to demonstrate its alignment with outdoor learning philosophies and present a few examples of how parkour could be utilised within outdoor learning practice.

History of Parkour

Unbeknown to most, the release of the documentaries *Jump London* and *Jump Britain* in the early 2000's, together with the iconic chase scenes in the James Bond film 'Casino Royale' and the concurrent explosion of YouTube and other social media, were not the beginning of parkour. Instead, they marked the emergence of the discipline in mainstream awareness as the culmination of almost two decades of dedication and development by a diverse group of pioneering young men, deep in the Parisian suburbs, who came to be known as the Yamakasi (1).

Like all good stories, the exact narrative will change depending on whose perspective you're taking, but the essence of



the parkour story is rooted as much in the Parisian parks, woodlands and forests as it is to the rooftops upon which parkour became famous. Playful games of hide and seek, tag and follow-the-leader afforded opportunities for the growing band of friends and relatives to explore myriad ways to navigate natural and urban landscapes alike, gradually expanding their capabilities through curiosity, creativity, and constant challenge. More than just the physical movement, parkour was also a platform for their self-development, allowing them to build awareness of their own limitations and, importantly, how to accept or overcome them.

Whilst predominantly self-directed, there were some external influences on the Yamakasi philosophy and approach, including high profile martial artists of the time such as Bruce Lee and, most significantly, the work of George Hébert. Hébert was a French former naval officer and physical educator who, in the early 20th Century, developed the 'Méthode Naturelle', a non-competitive, outdoor-based training method which placed equal emphasis on strength of character, altruistic motivations and the physical practice (2).

A key element of Hébert's 'Méthode Naturelle' was the various obstacle courses, or *parcoures*, he created in an attempt to mimic obstacles found in natural environments as a way of developing more functional fitness that was adaptable to overcoming real world obstacles. Not only do these obstacle courses live on in parks, playgrounds and outdoor education centres across the world to carry Hébert's legacy, but they also inspired parkour's name. How effectively are these obstacle courses utilised across different areas? Simply allowing and supporting people to play and explore different ways to move on, across and around these obstacles with a little bit of creativity may be a useful way to introduce parkour to different groups.

Hébert had travelled extensively with the French military and developed his methods in response to what he saw as the decline amongst industrialised nations of real-world capability to overcome challenges through both physical fitness and individual character. These observations share obvious similarities with Kurt Hahn's six declines of youth and, though it is unlikely the two men ever met despite their physical proximity, Hébert also moved away from his military origins, embedding his approach into wider



wider education when creating Palestra in 1918. Palestra was a private school for girls which exhibits many philosophical and educational similarities with the schools and Outward Bound programmes associated with Kurt Hahn.

Hébert nor Hahn were the first or last to voice concerns over the detrimental impact of urbanisation on young people. Indeed, their calls for more holistic, outdoor-based approaches to education and physical education (PE) amplified those of their predecessors Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and Johann GutsMuths (1759-1839) and continue to be echoed by their successors in outdoor education today.

Shared Values

The origins and ethos of parkour demonstrate its potential to bring together and actively engage young people in meaningful challenges that can facilitate holistic development (3). Indeed, it can be seen that parkour evolved organically in alignment with the values of youth adventure programming (4). For example, Hébert coined the term 'be strong to be useful' to capture the essential meaning of his educational philosophy; being strong not just physically or for yourself, but being strong in character and using your strength for the good of others. This utilitarian approach to training was fully embraced by the Yamakasi and remains central to parkour philosophy, evident in the strong social bonds across parkour communities which develop through shared experiences of learning and achievement. The holistic value of parkour is equally illustrated by the decision of the young men in France to name their group 'Yamakasi', which translates as 'strong body, strong mind' in Langali, one of the many languages spoken amongst the group.

Parkour as an outdoor adventurous activity

Understanding the roots of parkour affords the vision to create an adventurous learning environment (5), adaptable for a range of groups and context, for example outdoor adventurous activities (OAA) in PE or as an activity at outdoor education centres.

Facilitated as OAA within the English PE curriculum, parkour is considered a fun, social, physical activity (6) that may help address the continued marginalisation of outdoor practice in schools (7), especially given the recent OFSTED report which found that in three quarters of schools surveyed, OAA are taught either ineffectively or not at all (8). Using different types and combinations of jumps, vaults, rolls and balances to move over, under or along logs, low walls, kerbs, rocks or benches, for example, can help individuals to build confidence and competence in a broad range of movement skills, which may encourage and motivate them to develop further or try other related outdoor activities, such as different forms of climbing or orienteering. Moving beyond just the narrow conceptualisation of physical literacy, the nature of parkour can also contribute to the development of the broader notion of physical intelligence (9). This relates to the embodied capacity to understand your (physical) self in relation to the world around you and your resourcefulness to adapt to, or solve, problems through movement. This includes movements not just of the body, but also movements within the body, such as the interoceptive sensing and response to different thoughts and emotions evoked when faced with novel, risky or daunting parkour challenges.

The four commonly cited non-negotiables of outdoor education (mainly outdoors, experiential, challenge by choice, managed risk) (10) provide a useful framework for practitioners to prepare and facilitate meaningful parkour sessions within a school setting and may help to overcome hesitation or

resistance from school leaderships teams, staff, parents and possibly even the pupils themselves. Being mindful of possible negative perceptions of parkour, managing risk and allowing pupils to work together to select, create and/or adapt their own challenges aligns with the true social-cultural parkour values of teamwork, respect and not taking undue risks. If challenges are not realistically achievable then they are generally avoided until the requisite skills, confidence and experience are developed that considerably lower the risk; authentic parkour groups are often characterised by rituals of safety and not mindless risk-taking (11).

Parkour and environmental awareness

The urban environment *"is not a new environment – an artificial environment distinct from the natural environment – but the same old environment modified by man"* (12).

There are few access or inclusion barriers to parkour. No specific equipment or facilities are required beyond what would normally be worn when participating in physical activity. Sports halls, school grounds, local urban or green areas can all provide movement challenges, given a little knowledge,



experience and understanding of what parkour is and consideration of the surrounding environment.

How we relate to ourselves and our environment is central to parkour and an important feature of outdoor learning in general. In fact, our awareness and relationship to our environment shaped us humans over millions of years as we evolved to survive and thrive in a wild, outdoor, unforgiving environment. By outsourcing much of our need to move, it could be argued that instead of benefiting us, the development of our artificial, urban environment has resulted in a form of movement poverty that has left us both physically and mentally weaker (13). Becoming more aware of the movement opportunities that exist around us, challenging ourselves to seek different environments in which to move and to move in different ways in our local environments can help us to overcome this movement poverty and 'rewild' ourselves as moving humans.

Ecological dynamics, a blend of ecological psychology and dynamical systems theory (14), can help us to understand our awareness and relationship with our environment through a number of concepts, including affordances and constraints. Affordances describe how we perceive our environment in terms of what actions we believe are possible. So, dependent on our physical abilities and experiences, we may perceive a wall or tree as climbable, a gap between walls or over a stream as jump-able or a low barrier or fallen log as passable. Constraints are aspects of ourselves or the environment that reduce what is possible or guide us towards a more limited set of solutions for any given problem. We may be constrained by tiredness, feelings of anxiety, thoughts of self-doubt or directly by aspects of the environment, such as the size of a potential landing area, the shape of a tree or fence or the weather. Thinking in terms of affordances and constraints can be useful to guide the ways in which you facilitate sessions, ask questions or make professional judgements about the appropriateness of a challenge or activity.

Within parkour communities, the idea of parkour vision is a common topic of conversation, which relates directly to the concept of affordances. Developing parkour vision means to re-imagine the way you see your environment, the opportunities for movement that exist and the myriad ways in which you, or others, could overcome the challenges you perceive. Whilst parkour includes many named movements and techniques, a prescribed approach to problem solving is rarely followed. Instead, the focus is on being able to see and work out what options the environment affords and to find what works specifically for you, given your own unique constraints. Not only then is parkour an opportunity to re-imagine the way we view, interact and navigate the urban jungle (15), but by facilitating changing relationships with place in social groups that recognise and respect each individual's unique abilities, parkour can be seen as a form of co-operative, lifestyle sport that may help to bring outdoor learning to a wider audience and contribute to improvements in overall health and wellbeing.

Parkour for health and wellbeing

As an activity which incorporates a wide range of movement skills and fitness, whilst facilitating supportive groups and networks, parkour is increasingly being used by charities and organisations to positively support health and wellbeing, with sessions designed, for example, to support mental health and falls prevention in older adults. However, it is important to understand that learning (and life) is non-linear and unpredictable and that, along with the potential gains that can be made, there will be times when health and wellbeing can take a dip. To this end, research into the relationship between parkour and mental health (16) has revealed valuable insights. These insights have prompted the creation of a spiral continuum that can help guide the preparation and facilitation of parkour sessions in response to the health and wellbeing status of participants (see figure).



Figure 1 - Spiral Continuum





This spiral continuum is particularly important as a metaphorical tool for supporting individuals to see how they might transfer their learning from parkour into their everyday lives. It shows how participants might recognise their own state and, when it's appropriate, take on challenges by breaking them down into smaller, achievable steps as required. It shows when it might be necessary to take a step backwards to consolidate what you've already got or simply take time for yourself to regain your balance, or when the time is right to let go and just do it, taking that leap of faith to help redefine your own impossible.

Conclusion

It is hoped that through this article you've been able to judge for yourself how parkour fits the Institute for Outdoor Learning's description of outdoor learning, and the significant potential for parkour within outdoor learning, if facilitated appropriately. We welcome your thoughts and comments and direct you to a number of useful resources for those that wish to find out more. Check out the [Parkour UK homepage](#) and take a look at the exciting news from [Free Your Instinct \(Parkour for Mental Health\)](#) ▲

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Being at the centre of the spiral represents a generally positive mood and an individual who feels good about themselves and their ability, a state which presents opportunities for growth and development through relatively challenging, but adaptable, routes or movements. However, as stated, mental health can vary both within and between sessions or even individual challenges, so we must be aware of any changes and the direction in which participants are headed in order to respond appropriately. The correlation between mental health and physical ability is becoming increasingly recognised and understood. If a participant is struggling with something they would normally find easy, this can be an indicator of how they are feeling mentally. As the coach or instructor, we can utilise this understanding to support the participant. For instance, if a dip in mood and/or ability is observed, this may not be the time for working on new challenges, this may be a time for participants to become more attuned to themselves and/or a place to seek calm and relaxation. In this instance it may be more appropriate to focus on mastery of foundational movements such as precision landings, balance or repetition of already well-known skills, for example. This helps individuals to resonate with the task and environment, increasing their sense of control and achievement to help bring them back up to a more stable, confident state of wellbeing. There are also times when things just seem to click and come easily, the so-called 'flow state' (17), during which bigger challenges can be taken on and can even create a feeling of being airborne as you re-imagine what is possible. The ultimate goal for the individual is to be aware of where they are on the continuum at any time.

A SHARED VISION OUTDOOR LEA

A LOOK BACK AT THE IOL AND
SUPPORT



Global Bu

Article written by Jo Barnett, IOL CEO

The conference theme was developing, sharing and envisaging an approach to outdoor learning that will make a positive difference now, and in the future.

We tied in with World Standards Day to highlight how recognised and accepted standards are built on collaborative working. Agreed professional, occupational and benchmark standards are a testament to the power of cooperation and the belief that we are stronger than the sum of our parts.

In 2023, the World Standards Day emphasis was on the United Nation's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The IOL has sustainability as a 'golden thread' and is working to make planetary and organisational sustainability run through all we do.

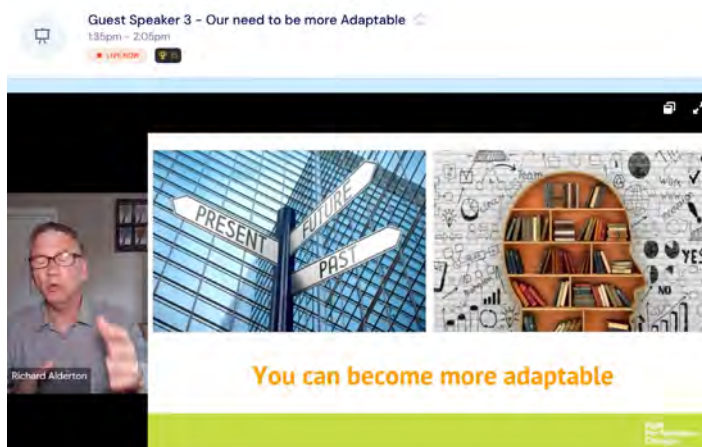
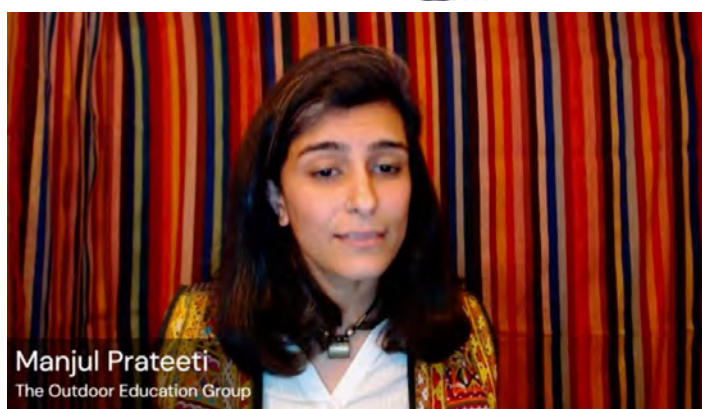
First ever online format

This was our first online conference and it was received with positive feedback and constructive comments to improve the experience for both attendees and presenters. It was nerve-racking to go down the online route being an outdoor learning organisation. We are still absorbing and reflecting, but the format seems a valuable addition to the IOL networking and conference offer.

Importantly, the conference proved inclusive which was a key aim. Some attendees remarked it was welcoming to attend as we could offer it for £20 or less to our members. It also had a global reach both in terms of presenters and attendees - connections were made across our outdoor learning world whilst minimising travel and associated environmental impacts.

Guest Speakers

The guest speakers gave four very different presentations, each inspirational in their own way. Manjul Prateeti opened the conference with her reflections on her personal outdoor learning journey from growing up in India and studying in Edinburgh, to working in Australia, via America - some of it on an Enfield Bullet motorbike! Robin Millar, MP for Aberconwy, shared his work chairing the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Outdoor Learning. He highlighted the importance of outdoor learning as something that is of lifelong value and reminded us that 'learning happens in timeless moments, not moments in time'.



N FOR A BETTER ARNING WORLD

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2023
TED BY



After lunch, Rich Alderton gave us a perspective from his experience of global business leadership with his presentation on developing a culture of adaptability. Encouraging us not to roll up like hedgehogs in the face of change, but instead to understand our fear and anxiety and move towards confidence and making a difference. Catrin Thomas completed the guest speaker presentations by entertaining us with her stunning photos of Antarctica, her tales of penguins and describing her role of Field Officer in the British Antarctic Survey. She addressed her own dilemma about travelling and living there and its sustainability, with the success of penguin conservation and enabling research on climate change.

Workshops

During the day there were 4 workshop sessions with 30 different workshops to choose from under the themes of

Sustainability, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, Community, Theory, Standards and workforce. The commitment to outdoor learning on the day was tremendous as over 250 people gave up their Saturday to attend, and our guest speakers and workshop presenters kindly gave their wisdom and knowledge for free. The workshop presenters are recognised for their expertise in their respective fields and attendees had a plentiful choice across the spectrum and depth of our sector.

Thanks to our sponsors and exhibitors (see logos in the banner) who helped make it happen. It isn't over yet as the event was recorded and those with tickets can access the parts they have yet to see at a time and place of their choice and comfort. Tickets are available if you want to join in, and the recording is available until April 2024 – just email institute@outdoor-learning.org ▲

Face to Face Conferences & Courses with IOL

Following our hugely successful online Conference on 14th October we are now moving on with programming face-to-face regional and special interest conferences and meetings as well as more webinars. These gatherings will offer opportunities to network, gain skills and get sector updates.

Book now to ensure your place.

BUSHCRAFT Two IOL Bushcraft Group Conferences

- 10th to 12th November at the Robin Hood Activity Centre, Nottinghamshire. Book HERE https://bit.ly/IOL_WebinarEvents and also one on 1st to 3rd March 2024 at Danemead Scout Camp, Hertfordshire (more details and bookings soon)

ADVENTURE FOR ALL IOL Adventure for All Conference

- 1st to 3rd December at Avon Tyrrell in Hampshire. Book HERE https://bit.ly/IOL_WebinarEvents

TRAIN THE TRAINER Course for Delivering Experiential Learning in the Outdoors. 13th - 16th Jan 2024 at Plas y Brenin. Book HERE https://bit.ly/IOL_WebinarEvents

OTHERS IN THE PIPELINE

- IOL North West Conference 2024 – The Role of the 21st Century Practitioner. 26th January 2024 in Ambleside with details to be announced this Autumn.
- Two IOL Cymru / Wales Conferences. Opportunities for IOL Members to showcase to teachers what they can offer to support the Curriculum for Wales through outdoor learning. IOL North Wales, 16th March 2024, at The University of Bangor. IOL South Wales, 13th April 2024, at The Atlantic College
- IOL Scotland / Alba are planning a gathering of Outdoor Learning professionals, practitioners and teachers sometime in December/ January - exact date and venue will be announced soon.

Conferences | Courses | Gatherings | Networking | Skills Sharing | Updates

FROM CHASING TOPS TO CLIMBING TREES

APPLYING THE PHILOSOPHY OF UBUNTU TO OUTDOOR EDUCATION



Opal Goldring is a recent graduate from the University of Cumbria BA(Hons) Outdoor Leadership programme and is currently employed as an Instructor in Development at The Outward Bound Trust. She has been an outdoor instructor in South Africa and the UK and has a passion for teaching others outdoors. When she is not at Outward Bound, she is usually heading for the fells to rock climb, hike or climb up trees.

“Adrenaline”, “Adventure”, “Extreme”. These are all words people associate with the outdoor sector (1). As the industry has grown over the years, the popularisation of so-called “adventure-sports” has driven white, middle-class individuals to partake in risk-sports such as rock-climbing, mountaineering, skiing and white-water paddling (2).

On a recent residential, students from the University of Cumbria were challenged to plan an expedition and scout the route as groups in the Cairngorm mountains. The intended outcome of the residential was to experience the process of planning a route and checking it before finalising an expedition programme for an imaginary group of young learners. Before undertaking their expeditions to check the planned route, groups had a one-night expedition in the same environment to review their skills and the local weather conditions.

During this one-night expedition, the group, which included the author, ascended from the Cairngorm skiing centre towards Coire an Lochain where they camped for the night. The following day, the group ascended the side of Coire an Lochain and was faced with 50 mph winds, with gusts of up to 60 mph. As a group of outdoors students we had all hiked up mountains before, but never experienced what it feels like to be blown off our feet. Our group returned to our bunkhouse at the end of the day battered, bruised and grimacing at the forecast, which promised strong winds for the rest of the week. Upon returning, our group realised that we had several important decisions to make. The route we had initially planned to check included walking up a ridge and camping on the plateau. The weather forecast now indicated that we would be exposed to 50mph winds for most of our walk. As a group, we sat down and evaluated our options. We had one member with a pre-existing injury, and another injured in the gale-force winds. Our chosen route would likely lead to more injuries than mountain tops.

At this point, the idea of “Munro bagging” on the practice expedition was out. All we had was the location of a bothy in Glen Feshie, tents, and the enthusiasm to explore. Originally our hearts had been set on having a few quality mountain days

so that we could add these to our logbook for Mountain Leader training. However, after reading the weather forecast, we realised our plans would need to change.

The group then re-evaluated the route, made a few changes, and set out the following morning for what turned out to be a perspective-changing journey. The journey was through Glen Feshie and involved a walk to the Ruigh Aiteachain Bothy, which is situated in the heart of the valley. Along the way, the group stopped to enjoy the scenery and to listen to readings of Nan Shepard’s “The Living Mountain”, a book which beautifully depicts the drama of the Cairngorm mountains.



A change of pace

The group then decided to focus more on ‘place’ and what affordances an area could provide us for environmental education. We would then use this experience to find relevant theories to inform our programme plan. Through this, we created a sense of place and had our experience shaped by the environment as it guided us to explore, climb and immerse ourselves in the surroundings.

“Ubuntu” is a philosophy core to South African culture and is rooted in the tradition of Zulu and Xhosa cultures and has the common understanding of “I am because we are” (3; 4). This philosophy is similar to Robert Greenlaf’s servant leadership in that it also values qualities such as community building and commitment to the growth of others (5; 6; 7). Ubuntu can be applied to group dynamics by incorporating values of collective responsibility, understanding, and valuing the cultural and social backgrounds of individuals and ensuring the wellbeing of individuals to ensure the wellbeing of the group (5). Incorporating Ubuntu is a critique of traditional adventures which can have high levels of risk (1). Risk does have a place and can offer learning benefits (8), but embracing Ubuntu allowed the group to not have risk as central to the journey.

Ubuntu in outdoor education

Ubuntu was the underpinning philosophy of this group's journey. It had been introduced by one of the group members in a lecture which covered considerations of how the philosophy may be applied in an outdoor context and how to mitigate cultural appropriation of the philosophy which has happened in the past (9). The group realised that if they were to continue with their intended plan, they would be putting injured members at risk, and consequently the group decision was made to alter the hiking plan.

The group decided that for the rest of their journey, they would move together, eat together and live together. We decided that meals would be communal, decisions would be shared, and the adventure would be guided by a will to explore. Holistic outdoor learning has been described as "a teaching and learning method that emphasises direct, multi-sensory experiences" (10). Outdoor holistic learning has been shown to assist high-school students in cooperating with others and coping with stressful situations (11). This was also present within this group of university students as climbing trees, exploring the river, and journeying together assisted the team in effectively working together and coping with the stress of changing plans and two members of the party being injured. This is mirrored in the learning outcomes found in another study by Asfeldt and Hvenegaard (12), who found that students who partook in a wilderness expedition had increased self-awareness, improved group living and a greater appreciation of the experience.

However, the journey into Glen Feshie showed that similar learning outcomes could be achieved in an accessible way, guided by the philosophy of Ubuntu. Ubuntu was present throughout, especially when the group had to alter decisions whilst on their expedition as one member's injury worsened. The member suggested walking back and being picked up while the group carried on. However, as a collective, the group decided to walk towards the pickup point and camp there so that the injured member would not have to walk alone and could still be present for the experience. One member stated: "We are one group. If one person is injured, we all move with them and help them out. If you need picking up, we all do because we are a community." Going forward, one can see that a rich, creative experience was had from changing plans and embracing a philosophy that values togetherness. The philosophy of Ubuntu can be utilised to create a holistic experience which values collective community and making group decisions. Ubuntu has the potential to be applied in leadership as it upholds the qualities of interconnection, responsibility, and accountability (6). Meylahn & Musiyambiri (6) argue that Ubuntu may fail when there is a lack of transparency. Therefore, groups need to be more transparent about their injuries, fears and feelings, to have effective transparency and avoid problems with group decision-making.



Conclusion

One can see how a group effectively decided on a change of philosophy and was able to use it to foster a completely different adventure which valued exploration, community, and environmental learning. Embracing Ubuntu is something which practitioners or groups could do to improve group cohesion, make more informed decisions, and create holistic journeys. Through changing our philosophy of practice, we may hope to challenge traditional outdoor "adventures" and create a new wave of experiential learning that values exploring shrubs and trees over chasing mountain tops ▲

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WANT TO BUILD A TEAM?

GO SAILBOAT RACING!



Dr Roger Hopper is passionate about how the outdoors can provide transformational life changing experiences. Roger is a multi-disciplinary outdoor practitioner who is currently employed by South Devon College as a Skills Development Manager. Roger is also the creator of the National Outdoor Learning Award. He can often be found at sea, sailing on his yacht called "Passion"!

Nina, the navigator, shouted clearly above 20 knots of wind, "60 seconds to start". Eleven of us were racing on Alpha (1), a 52-foot wooden Bristol Channel Pilot Cutter in the Pilot Cutter Review Race. All of us had sailed and raced together before for many years and with a rush of adrenaline we were focused on getting a good start (first boat across the start line) in the shelter of St Mawes harbour, before we headed out into an easterly swell and Force 7 winds at the entrance of Fal estuary.

We were three families of friends, all of whom had raced together in all sorts of sailboats (wooden, fibreglass, dinghies, sports-boats and yachts). This was the fourth and final day of the Pilot Cutter Review. We'd had two days racing along the Cornish coast from port to port and one day of shorter races like today in the entrance of the Fal estuary. We were all feeling confident and familiar with the boat. For me, transformational outdoor learning happens when the experiences are intense and peak to create those magic moments. Sailboat racing, especially when the conditions are testing is intensely immersive for the senses and in any race there are multiple occasions when these magic moments happen (a good start, overtaking a boat, crossing the finish line). They happen even more often on those days when the individuals work together in a cohesive manner to create that developed, performance-focused team. This was one of those days and I was loving it.

When racing on any sailboat everyone has defined roles. On Alpha in this race, we had: Paul on helm, steering and focusing on sailing quickly; Nina as navigator and on radio controls; Ben was running Alpha's seven sails according to wind strength, direction etc.; Hayden was tactician; Mike was at the very back (stern) of the boat controlling the mainsail; Alex, Maxine, Heather, Joline, Evelyn and I were crew (middle and front – bow of boat) controlling all of the other six sails. On Alpha, with no mechanical winches, hoisting/dropping and tightening sails involved several of us all hauling ropes together.

Communication

Multiple and defined roles mean you don't have to understand everything that's going on and can involve people who may have never been on a sailboat before. The magic moment is when everyone is focused on their role, performs it at the right time and in the right way, and, with sails powered up, you glide past another boat into the lead. Whether you are winning is often difficult to know as in most races each boat is different

and therefore a handicap system is used. You don't normally know your final place until it's announced by the race officer after everyone has finished.

On this occasion, in wind gusts of 38 knots and 2-3m swells, many boats were retiring. However, Alpha is a fast and powerful boat, built to cope with these sorts of conditions and we, as an experienced team, even with waves breaking over the bow and washing down the whole length of the boat, were loving it! To maintain safety and performance, efficient communication is essential. Normally this is verbal. However, if you're sailing close to another boat and want to avoid giving away your next move, hand signals can be a surreptitious alternative.

Resilience and decision-making

Races can be anything from an hour, all the way up to a multi-day event. Whole day races would normally be along the coastline and multi-day races could be further offshore. The longer the race, the more issues like weather, tides, navigation, nutrition and rest come into play. Multi-day races will include watches where some people are racing the boat while others could be sleeping or preparing food. All of this creates opportunities to develop leadership, organisational skills, resilience and decision-making skills. Whole and multi-day races quite often allow more time for those interpersonal conversations and environmental connections with the dolphins surfing on your bow wave, sea birds taking a rest on your spars (wooden poles that hold the sails up) and stunning sunsets.

Problem solving

During the morning half-day race we damaged the mainsail, which Ben and I had to repair during a break before the afternoon race. Fixing and maintaining things is an inevitable part of the sailing experience. Alpha, as a 119-year-old wooden boat, needs a bit more loving maintenance than many newer boats. After two hours of intense racing, as we crossed the line, Nina shouted "finish". The release of joy at having performed as a team in extremely challenging conditions resulted in instantaneous cheers and clapping from the whole team.

The perfect recipe for building teams

The Association of Sail Training (2) is the umbrella body of Sail Training in the UK with numerous members offering all sorts of sailing experiences. You could also contact your local Royal Yachting Association Club (3) where you will find sailboat owners who are often looking for race crew. Both organisations have members who can facilitate sailboat racing experiences which purposefully aim to develop team skills. The team you wish to develop could be a group of young people, an adult group or a staff/instructor group. A sailboat experience, if you haven't tried it before, could be a winning solution ▲

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OUTDOOR LEARNING IN FRANCE

ALAIN KERJEAN, PROJECT INITIATOR & FOUNDER OF THE FRENCH BRANCH OF OUTDOOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING, WRITES ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN OUTDOOR LEARNING INSTITUTE IN FRANCE

The Institute for Outdoor Learning is delighted to support 'Apprendre par l'expérience' (Learning by Doing) Association and the INEX project. We share the same values and aspirations to champion high quality outdoor learning and support and train professionals in this sector. We are looking forward to developing closer links and learning from each other (Jo Barnett CEO, IOL).

Outdoor learning in France, written by Alain Kerjean (Project Initiator & Founder of the French branch of Outdoor Experiential Learning, 1987).

[TRANSLATED]

We are delighted to have the support of the Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL) for the creation of a comparable institute in France. I would like to introduce the thinking behind this new venture by sharing a summary of four articles we have recently published on the matter. We have always considered it necessary to build and innovate on what already exists: 150 years of educational heritage is to be updated in our country (the "school caravans", Pierre de Coubertin, etc.), but also 82 years of British adaptation of Outdoor Learning to young people and adults. We will be happy when the time comes to call on some senior instructors who are members of the IOL, in order to train a new generation of French instructors.

The Experiential Movement provides a response to the educational, social and economic challenge of developing and certifying human skills. Have you ever noticed that education adapts to crisis moments of each human generation? Generally, it has been the economists and entrepreneurs who sound the alarm and an educational innovation appears. Today, it is the digital revolution and the disruption of post COVID-19 lockdown that calls for a paradigm shift in education and training. Will the necessary adaptations happen again? (1,2)

Faced with the challenge of "soft skills" or "human skills", the time is no longer for diagnoses, benchmarks, studies and the intellectualisation of what we do not understand, for solutions that have already been proven. Through "the Singapore method", we only now understand that the common denominator of the countries at the top of the international rankings is a strategic investment in a globally recognised educational axis: Outdoor Experiential Learning (3).

However, the Experiential Movement has existed in France since 1987 (4). Our adventure programmes for young people and companies were a media phenomenon in the 90s and influenced countless educators and trainers who today claim "experiential pedagogy" without referencing its foundational principles.

Recent reports and studies recommend structuring a heterogeneous offer, training and supporting professionals in evidence-based solutions, including "experiential practices". This is precisely what the Experiential Movement proposes: to create an "Institut National Expérientiel" (INEX) as it exists in other countries, with a training and experimentation centre called the "Experiential Learning Lab" (ELLAB). We hope, with these developments, we can once again deliver world-leading services to the community of professionals in the development of "human skills" (5). As we did 36 years ago, it's not about pretending "we're already doing it" or reinventing the wheel, but about playing together for the common good and building on the existing. There is so much more to innovate! ▲

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LOVE HER WILD

ENCOURAGING WOMEN TO BE OUTDOOR BEGINNERS AND LEADERS



Siân Brewer has worked on National Park Youth Voice projects, teaching with outdoor educational charities, training Ten Tors teams and running Discover Your Outdoors as a sole trader. She became involved with Love Her Wild whilst working towards becoming an Accredited Practitioner of the IOL (APIOL).

Love Her Wild's Outdoor Academy took place in April 2023 offering twelve female outdoor beginners a grant-funded opportunity to develop the skills and confidence to make the outdoors part of their everyday lives (see Horizons issues #100, #101 and #102). But it was also designed to provide professional development opportunities for the leadership team running the adventure. In this final article, you will hear from three of the leadership team behind Outdoor Academy: myself and two of the Assistant Leaders, Maureen and Dagmar.

What development opportunities did you have throughout Outdoor Academy?

Siân: I tried to design Outdoor Academy to intentionally give myself and the Assistant Leaders as many learning opportunities as possible. I reflected on gaps in my CV which I do not have the opportunity to fill through other aspects of my work: recruiting and managing a team was a major one. I've been proactively preparing for the LPIOL award (Leading Practitioner for the Institute of Outdoor Learning), so consciously chose to design a national project which would reach beyond my usual networks and develop the practice of other leaders. I also asked Horizons if I could write these articles to share with other outdoor professionals!

Maureen: I had the opportunity to experience all aspects of organising and running an outdoor event ranging from reviewing applications and selecting team members, through to writing reports to sponsors after the event had taken place. Prior to the event, in addition to researching and preparing my own workshop, I prepared social media communications, helped to plan the logistics/content for the overall event, contributed to risk assessments, liaised with the team members, created surveys and contacted organisations for freebies/additional resources. At the event itself, I was hands-on, involved in preparing meals for a large group, supporting other Assistant Leaders in the workshops and encouraging team members to get the most from the experience.

Dagmar: This was my first time actively stepping into an outdoor leadership role. I contributed to developing an overall outdoor weekend programme and my own individual workshop from scratch, integrating and researching my own area of interest and learning aims. I was involved in the team member selection process (from defining parameters to fielding applications), building a team, communication with team members (email, telephone), post-event follow-ups and carrying Outdoor Academy into the wider community (emails, social media, video conferencing). I received personal



feedback and coaching (in preparation and as reflection), plus signposting for future opportunities and next steps.

What skills, experience or knowledge did these opportunities offer you?

Siân: It gave me experience of sharing a mission-led vision with a team and managing them in a way which gave them the skills to deliver it, take ownership of it and shape it. It's given me some great examples to talk about in interviews and great skills in communicating and promoting a large project on social media and designing application processes.

Maureen: Getting practical experience in what it takes to run an outdoor event. I gained knowledge about available resources and organisations who offer support on wellbeing in nature. I developed an understanding of what different styles and approaches there are when planning and structuring a workshop as well as learning new topics presented by the other assistant leaders.

Dagmar: I gained experience of building a cohesive and varied programme with a good balance between presenting information, self-discovery, independent learning, group learning, time for connection and time for reflection. I gained skills in group management (from wording promotional social media posts and invitations, to encouraging engagement before and after the event) – setting the tone and expectations. I had the chance to take ownership of my own workshop and the weekend as a whole as a group project, building in a structure for outcome evaluation from the start, including collecting and evaluating feedback. I gained experience of risk assessments and considering different needs, preparing contingency plans and being flexible in the moment, adjusting to unplanned circumstances or spontaneous ideas.

How has Outdoor Academy shaped your idea of outdoor leadership?

Siân: I already had a very broad idea of outdoor leadership having been lucky enough to observe and trial a wide range of styles. It was a good lesson in remembering that you may have to change your leadership style to suit the situation. I had hoped to adopt a coaching and facilitating style, but I found there were times when I had to be more direct. I actually felt quite uncomfortable and disappointed about this immediately afterwards, because it didn't match my expectations, but reflecting helped me see that it had been effective and needed.



Maureen: While preparation is important, you need to think on your feet at all times, it is also important to adjust and adapt depending on the situation (e.g., change in weather or location or how a group is engaging with your workshop).

Dagmar: I've found it encompasses a much larger range of skills, responsibilities and tasks than at first glance (from admin to group management and teaching skills beyond one's own outdoor skills). There are many different ways of being an outdoor leader and many more leadership styles beyond the stereotype of being a larger-than-life personality, natural entertainer and having climbed every mountain since childhood. This means there is space for me and everyone else to bring their own personality and passions to the table without performing a preconceived role. Leadership is much more than teaching skills and providing information, it is about creating a shared experience, providing space, offering community, supporting self-learning and discovery, connecting (with others, with oneself, with nature) and personal development as much as skills development. It isn't about delivering pre-packaged takeaways, it's about inviting active participation and allowing people to take ownership of their learning experience to grow in confidence and feel valued.



Maureen: I have taken the summer to immerse myself in lots of outdoor activities with the intention of replenishing myself and being reinvigorated and inspired to lead some activities as a volunteer. I am also coaching women looking to regain their confidence while improving their wellbeing. Anyone interested to learn more about how to regain their confidence can contact me via email at flourishandthrivecoachingltd@gmail.com.

Dagmar: I was able to recognise that, even though I still have a lot to learn, I also already have something to offer and the ability to quickly learn from/pass on my own research. I don't have to wait until I have accumulated every qualification possible and 20 years of experience to start sharing my skills and knowledge. Outdoor Academy helped me to start rebuilding my confidence and belief (in myself and my dreams) after a negative experience by allowing me to see myself in a different light and having others (Siân, the other Assistant Leaders and the team members) believe in me and welcome me. It has given me the motivation to pursue a career in the outdoors with more purpose and the encouragement to take concrete actions towards that goal. I have since embarked on my Lowland Leader qualifications, I have become a Wild Volunteer for Love Her Wild and have run my first event in that role, I have assisted and shadowed others on outdoor courses, I have created a set of "rediscovering walking" exercises and trialled them with different groups.



What has changed as a result of your being involved in Outdoor Academy? Or What have you gone on to do as a result of being involved?


Siân: I have started my registration to become an LPIOL. When I became an APIOL (Accredited Practitioner of the Institute for Outdoor Learning) in 2018, my application was based on hindsight, reflecting on skills and experiences I already had. This time, I've been much more proactive, choosing to take on things which would set me up for LPIOL and Outdoor Academy was one of them. Creating reflection tools for the Assistant Leaders encouraged me to revisit some of the material from my APIOL award which helped me prepare for applying.

Conclusion

Outdoor Academy has been an incredible project to create! It's given 12 outdoor beginners the skills and confidence to make the outdoors part of their lives and supported the development of 4 outdoor leaders. Beyond those who attended, it's shown others, participants and leaders alike, that you don't have to have fancy equipment, be an athlete or undertake extreme challenges to be 'outdoorsy'. Learning to be 'outdoorsy' is for all.

We invite anyone who would find it helpful (or just interesting!) to know more to get in touch at discoveryouroutdoors@outlook.com ▲

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ENABLING ADVENTUROUS LIVES THROUGH ADVENTUROUS MINDSETS

OPINION



Nev Holmes (BA(Hons), PGCE, APIOL) worked in the outdoors for over 20 years with a wide variety of client groups. He has also worked in mental health services and prison education. He is now a learning and development facilitator working with organisations on leadership development, culture change and other areas that come under the banner of 'soft skills.'

“To live is the rarest thing in the world, most people just exist” – Oscar Wilde.

Every day, most people make a choice. Sometimes that choice is not a conscious one. It's more a choice made through societal expectations, familial pressures and what we see as 'the norm'. People often choose what they see as predictability, reliability and what they think is safety. We call it security, sometimes we even venture that it is respectability. When faced with conscious choice, some run away. But what is the conscious choice? Simply put, do I step out of my comfort zone and take a risk and follow the path of an adventure, or do I not?

Those of us with a love of adventure and the outdoors know all too well the wellbeing benefits of our favourite activities and our favourite places. We are lucky in that we have found a way to make adventure and the outdoors part of our lives. For many people, though, adventure is an often misunderstood and alien concept. It can be seen as something that just exists in outdoor spaces. It can be seen as reckless and irresponsible. It can also be seen purely from the context of the big stuff, like climbing a rock face or a mountain or sailing across the ocean.

What is adventure?

Colin Mortlock describes in his book 'Beyond Adventure' what he calls elemental experiences; that is, experiences that transcend normal living. Mortlock stated, "I believe the urge to explore, to find out, to adventure is instinctive" (1). So, adventurousness could be described as the drive to find elemental experiences. The adventurous experiences that Mortlock describes in his book are what I would call big adventures, for example expeditions to Alaska, climbing mountains and rock climbing. I would argue that life is also potentially full of mini adventures. Starting a new job or school, for example, would constitute a mini adventure.

Walking somewhere that you would normally drive to, speaking to someone that you would not normally speak to or even going for a walk at night to look at the stars. These are all mini adventures in that they have an uncertain outcome. Put simply, something that you wouldn't normally do.

For those of us who have worked, or still work, in the outdoor sector there lies a responsibility. Alongside realising the recognised benefits of outdoor education, i.e., the development of confidence, leadership, communication skills, resilience, I would argue that we need to promote an adventurous mindset in those that we guide, instruct, and enable.

Accessing a more adventurous life, along with its benefits for both physical and mental health, starts with developing an adventurous mindset. Inactivity can manifest in the tendency to experience part of life vicariously through television and digital media. A level of adventure can arguably be experienced through movies and gaming as well, but it is second-hand adventure. It requires no real physical effort and if it goes wrong, you can simply turn it off or start again. On the other hand, I feel that first-hand adventure, where you are engaging in adventurous experiences without a filter, can offer endless mental and physical health benefits.

What is an adventurous mindset?

I have heard many people over the years describe adventure as freedom and adventurers as the seekers of freedom. For some, it is freedom from the routine of their everyday life, for others it is the freedom to make their own choices and set their own agenda. For others it is the freedom from the clutter and seemingly endless distractions of modern existence. Adventure is about living in the moment and, for me, it is ultimate mindfulness. It doesn't have to be doing some tricky moves on a rock climb, all that matters is that you are doing something in the moment. Likewise, it doesn't have to be canoeing down a rapid on a river or navigating through bad weather on a mountain. I believe that engaging in an adventurous mindset is to engage in the immediate and real. You cannot put adventure down and come back to it later. Nor can you ignore it, because it will continue whether you like it or not. It is a mindset.

Since having children, I have begun to look at adventure

through the eyes of a small child. Enjoying the simplest of things, such as following a line of ants or staring at the stars, can be full of wonder and discovery. Surely this is adventure in its purest form. My children love going out for a walk in the dark with a head torch. We look at the stars, if they are out, we look and listen for wildlife, and I will often make them the pathfinder; they own the journey and make the majority of decisions in relation to where we go and when we stop. An act as simple as scrambling over some rocks becomes, in the eyes of a child, an epic mountaineering escapade. Sand dunes become mountains. I believe that this is the heart of an adventurous mindset: following curiosity, using imagination and responding to your immediate surroundings.

It is a truism that children are made for adventure, they are literally programmed by nature to excel at it. Like all young animals they learn experientially and in order to do that they have to explore, try new things and see what is around the next corner. Over time, I feel that society has endeavoured to teach children that adventure is dangerous, that experimenting with things is not worth it and will probably get you in trouble. Indeed, “children are disappearing from the outdoors at a rate that would make the top of any conservationist’s list of endangered species if they were any other member of the animal kingdom...” (2). Consequently, I feel that young people are much less likely to have an adventurous mindset.

Children aside, as we grow older it becomes much harder for us to justify micro adventure and play when there are no kids around. Our adult-selves are always too aware of social conformity, so-called standards and the ensuing embarrassment that occurs when we dare to step out of that framework. I believe that we have forgotten how to play and that is dangerous. It’s dangerous because it inhibits us in terms of our view of the world, it inhibits us in our behaviours and means we struggle to access an adventurous mindset. We become less open to new experiences and to new viewpoints as a result. And this, I would argue, eventually has a negative

effect on our wellbeing and our mental health. Children will inevitably learn our behaviours; if we cannot maintain an adventurous mindset, neither will they.

Outdoor learning and an adventurous mindset

I believe that most adults that get involved in outdoor learning programmes are there as either accompanying adults or as participants sponsored by an employer/organisation. I feel that adult participation is defined by a distinct purpose that is often not defined by them as individuals. Are we missing something by not also trying to expose them to the possibilities of an adventurous mindset in addition to their roles and responsibilities related to the programme they are involved in?

I believe that the greatest loss for any person, whether they are a child or an adult, is the loss of curiosity. I have met so many adults that do not appear to have questions. I have met so many people that just accept and do not wonder. I have not, however, met many children who are not filled with wonder and curiosity. Somewhere between childhood and adulthood the switch is turned off. It no longer seems to matter anymore that there is so much to discover and marvel at. It no longer feels fun to stand in the wind and feel the force of nature. When do people start to hate the things that they once loved? For example, when does snow stop being fun and instead become an imposition, something to be hated or irritated by? I believe we need to hold a child’s curiosity, their wonder and their adventurous mindset dear. We also need to help adults find their curiosity again, to encourage their reconnection with adventure. What is the best way to rediscover an adventurous mindset? I often think a good place to start is by jumping in a puddle! ▲

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- Some images have been provided by the author. The author retains copyright.



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND OUTDOOR LEARNING

PART 2

PART 2 - IMAGE GENERATION



David Hills is at Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia. He has over 20 years of experience in outdoor education instructing, teaching, and lecturing and his areas of research include technology, pedagogical frameworks and curriculum design.



Chris North is a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Health at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand.

His teaching background includes secondary and tertiary institutions in New Zealand and North America. Chris' research is in the areas of outdoor education practices, environmental education and initial teacher education.

In this article, we build on the text-generating artificial intelligence (AI) that we discussed in part 1 (see Horizons #101, reference 4), and explore image generation as this technology evolves. AI has reached our profession, and the global discussion of AI and adventure education and outdoor learning is building. A recent international article that we co-authored with colleagues (1) presents the views of 14 leading outdoor educators from 10 countries and highlights the current thinking around the management of AI in outdoor learning. This includes five emerging themes of bias and equity, explorations of AI, pedagogy and safety, place and experience and more-or-less than human relationships. These five themes are omnipresent in AI's latest iteration of image generation.

In this article, we begin by describing how images are generated using AI, identify the challenges, offer six considerations that could be used in practice and look ahead to the next evolution of this technology.

Image Generation

Open AI plug-ins use image generators like **Midjourney** which can generate any image in any format by responding to written 'prompts'. Users are encouraged to 'imagine' something and then specify the format (for example, an image or a cartoon). Users can specify the focus, resolution, and other creative details. This software is so good that it is often hard to distinguish it from a photo taken in real life. Check out the examples to the right - they were generated by entering original prompts to Midjourney.

Like text generation and any internet-based tool, AI holds a mirror back to society and reflects any existing bias and stereotyping which, in these images, are clear for all to see. Whilst the advantages of AI are considerable, for some outdoor educators these images contribute to under-representation and undermine some of the progress towards equity and inclusion, which we will explore further.

The Challenges of AI Generated Media

The concerns around AI sit at two different levels. Firstly, the design and coding process, and secondly, the information used to train the AI. Let's look at each of these in turn.



Prompt entered: "Imagine an adventure education and outdoor learning instructor, photo-realistic".



Prompt entered: "outdoor education participants, engaging in a variety of adventure activities, in different environments, photo-realistic".

Imagine a world created by programming enthusiasts who are largely young, white and male. In Silicon Valley, they find what is sometimes called a bromance (two guys who get on incredibly well - often to the exclusion of others) which can develop into an exclusive community - what Emma Chang (2) calls a “brotopia”. The programmers create workplaces that celebrate their strengths and experience phenomenal success in the commercial world. The giddy successes of this boom have generated many blind spots, including “sexist apps; system design to allow and to encourage online hate and harassment; sexist and violent gaming; health apps that focus on generic human and/or male health, not women’s health” (3). AI arose from these same “brotopian” roots, and there are many concerns about the biases inherent in the programming of AI. AI’s ethical failure is taking a particular secular, scientific, philosophical, cultural (and often gendered) experience and applying it universally (3). In short, the design and coding of AI is not neutral.

The second aspect is biases in the training data (what AI uses to learn). Essentially, and unsurprisingly, the information on the internet does not represent all types of people. Some have greater access and opportunities than others, so the internet overly presents knowledge and information from some demographics. This further amplifies the potential for programming biases. Even if coding was objectively neutral, AI would take existing inequities from the internet, and the results would be biased. Given that there is also design bias, this creates a situation whereby AI generates responses based on a particularly narrow world-view.

In Practice

Like any technology, we encourage people to use intentional, systematic, and evidence-based approaches to AI image generation. To support this in outdoor learning, we offer six considerations below:

1. Enhanced Learning: AI-generated images can visually explain concepts that might be difficult to encounter in real life, offering a richer understanding.
2. Detachment from Reality: Over-reliance on generated images might disconnect students from authentic outdoor experiences.
3. Misrepresentation: AI-generated images might sometimes fail to capture the nuances and intricacies of real environments.
4. Promotion: The images generated by AI are of people who do not exist in real life and avoids permissions required in the use of real people.
5. Dependency: Risk of leaning too much on technology, neglecting essential outdoor skills and hands-on experiences.
6. Green/Brown-Washing: Previously, organisations would use images that were taken on-site and with real people, which, although posed or contrived, would hold significant elements of reality. Through AI, organisations can easily present themselves as more inclusive (e.g., ethnically diverse) or environmentally conscious without making any meaningful changes.

Looking Ahead

As shown through the literature and the images, AI will present a particular view of the world. Being critical and aware of the lens of AI is important as we start to use the fuller features. We encourage you to play with AI and come to understand its strengths and limitations. We have had a lot of fun with our friends and colleagues asking AI to provide an image of a particular professional. For example, when asked for a lecturer, academic or researcher, AI always adds a pair of glasses to the person and some grey hair.

Check out the reference list to read the full article from the Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning (1) or the previous article from Horizons #101 on text generation. Don’t forget that there is more to AI than Chat GPT and image generation by Midjourney. We encourage you to explore these technologies in text and images to see how they may enhance your outdoor learning pedagogy. In the future, we will explore AI video generation and consider how to manage these further technological developments in outdoor learning. Finally, check out some additional AI-generated images and their prompts below ▲



Prompt entered: “A group of outdoor education students, using mobile technology in nature with student to student and also student to nature interactions, photo-realistic, 4k”



Prompt entered: “An outdoor education instructor, standing next to an outdoor education lecturer, standing next to an outdoor education participant, photo-realistic”

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Images in this article have been sourced from Midjourney AI.

UNDERSTANDING APPRENTICESHIPS

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT THE LEVEL 3 OUTDOOR ACTIVITY INSTRUCTOR STANDARD



Jim Whittaker is the Founder and Managing Director of Channel Training. Driven by an absolute belief in the value of outdoor learning and the people who deliver it, he has dedicated his career to workforce development in the sector. Jim is well known throughout the outdoor industry and is involved in projects across the sector. He was Chair for the Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres 2019-2022 and is a Trustee for the Institute for Outdoor Learning. He is a keen sailor, professional Yachtmaster with the Tall Ships Youth Trust and RNLI Commander and LTC for Minehead Lifeboat.

Our sector is now some five years into the new world of Apprenticeship Standards. So – how is our new instructor standard operating? How did it come about in the first place? How does it differ from the apprenticeship frameworks of old? What ever happened to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)? This article tries to answer these questions and more, providing a current insight into the value of the Outdoor Activity Instructor Apprenticeship Standard for organisations in the outdoor learning sector.

History

The notion of an apprenticeship as a route to competence has been with us for as long as any of us can remember. Most often the word apprenticeship conjures up images of a plumber's mate or a trainee bricklayer learning that trade from an experienced practitioner. And in many ways this model hasn't changed – this is the inherent value of apprenticeships and the main reason that they have endured multiple changes of government and education policy direction. However, the concept of an apprenticeship lost its way slightly during the late 1980s. Youth opportunities schemes moved to youth training schemes and, whilst central to up-skilling an unfairly impacted demographic in challenging economic times, these youth initiatives did little to promote the integrity of the work-based learning concept. We must, however, be careful not to fall into lazy stereotypes; many reputable employers offered extremely robust and valuable youth training schemes. Nevertheless, apprenticeships were tarred with a brush that

painted a picture of low paid opportunities with low expectations for low achieving young people. Restyling as “Modern Apprenticeships” did little to tackle this, still being Further Education (FE) driven, generally parochial and aimed at 16-25 year olds; it was college-based learning with work experience. Apprenticeships still struggled to be viewed as much other than a route for those who had little chance of substantial academic achievement and held low aspirations.

I believe that now we have returned to the original and trusted concept in many crucial ways. Let's look at our sector specifically: we used to have the Level 2 Activity Leadership apprenticeship framework and a Level 3 Outdoor Programmes apprenticeship framework. These were NVQ based frameworks, meaning continuous assessment of vocational competence with bolt on knowledge qualifications. The problems with this framework-based apprenticeship approach were identified by the Richard Review in 2012. In response to pressure from employers to review apprenticeships, the UK Government commissioned Doug Richard, respected educationalist and entrepreneur, to conduct a review. His findings were that, broadly speaking, apprenticeships weren't in fact employer-focussed and were largely based on further education provision. This finding built on similar themes highlighted by the Wolf Review a year or so earlier on vocational education more broadly. Essentially, the Richard Review found that apprenticeship frameworks were built on a range of FE qualifications, rather than a clear route to competence, and that the in-course workplace assessment model did not support a genuinely progressive training package.

The proposal from Richard was that the apprenticeships system should be reformed, with new apprenticeship standards created, underpinned by these basic principles:

- Designed by groups of employers.
- No FE qualifications.
- No on-programme summative assessment.
- An independent end-point assessment at the end of the training phase.
- A flexible route to competence.

The Institute for Apprenticeships invited sectors to form employer groups (called Trailblazers) and started to phase out frameworks. The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) started to reduce framework funding. Apprenticeship reform was underway. The Institute for Outdoor Learning took on the sector Trailblazer role and, thanks to the efforts of many, but notably Mark Lavington and Neal Anderson, an effective employer group formed and the Outdoor Activity Instructor (OAI) standard was written and submitted. This was an immense and pivotal piece of work in our sector.

We had long known outdoor activity instructors worked at a level above the Level 2 designation of Activity Leadership and, sure enough, the Institute for Apprenticeships levelled the new outdoor activity instructor standard at Level 3. It was funded significantly lower than the Trailblazer group suggested, but still more than the previous framework funding and meant that, for the first time ever, our sector had a genuinely sensible apprenticeship to work with.

The employer

One of the fundamental and vitally important elements of the change from frameworks to standards is the placement of the employer right at the heart of the apprenticeship process. This should seem completely obvious, but, as the Richard Review uncovered, the actual reality with apprenticeship frameworks for many employers was that they felt as though it was being done to them, rather than them owning the process. This was, of course, absurd. The employer is the one offering the job, carrying all the responsibility for employment and providing the end product – in our case high quality outdoor learning.

In our sector, we can now enjoy a real renaissance of employer-led apprenticeship provision, where organisations design and own their own programme by engaging with a training provider that meets their needs. The role of the provider is to understand, complement and support the work of the employer and help the organisation achieve its mission.

I spoke with mentors and apprentices from two organisations, the Anderton Centre and the Field Studies Council, to gain their perspectives for this article, and I'm really grateful for their time and input. Meet David and Emily from The Anderton Centre (pictured on page 32) and Kayleigh and Emily from the Field Studies Council (pictured on page 33).

Why choose apprenticeships?

Stripped right back, the apprenticeship route makes sense. The concept of learning to do something by doing it, alongside experienced practitioners and with proper training and support, provides a natural route to competence.

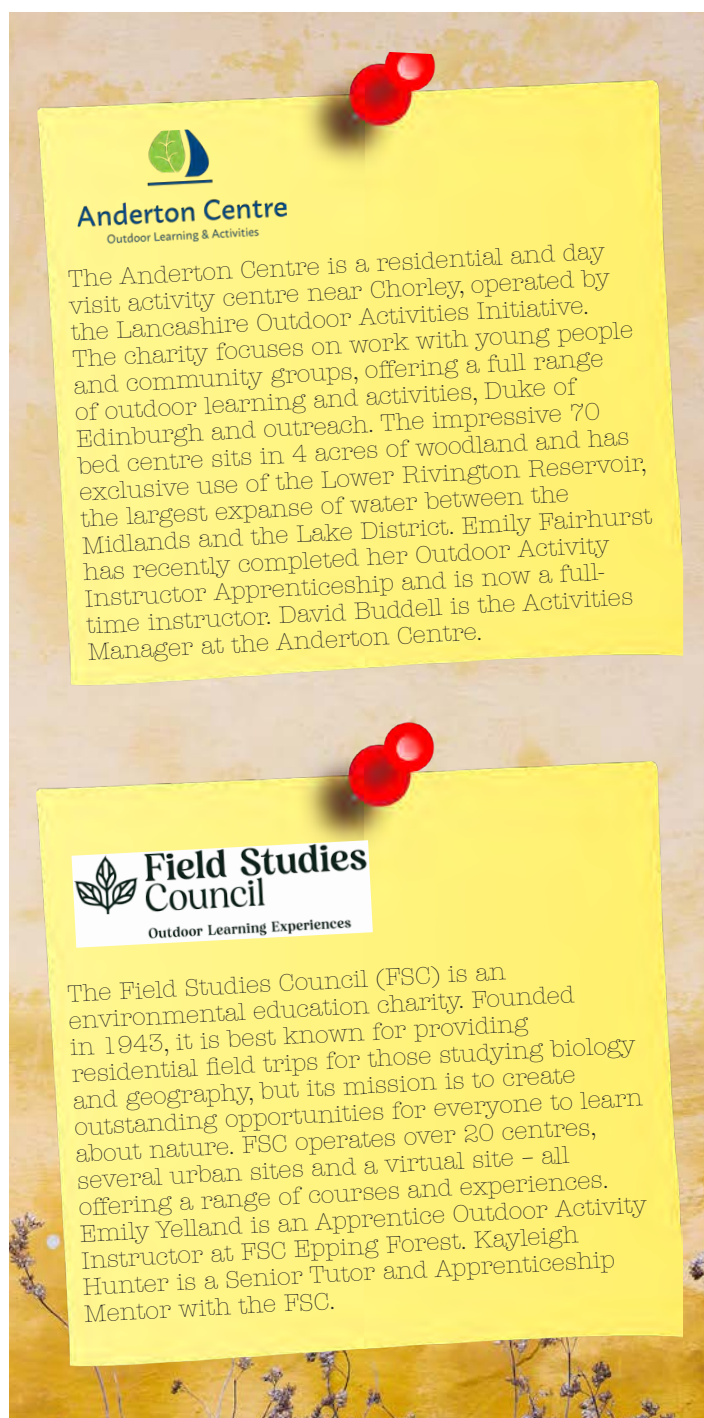
"The Outdoor Activity Instructor Apprenticeship provides a structured way to train individuals in specific skills and competencies that are extremely relevant to the Anderton Centre's needs", said David.

The Field Studies Council (FSC) have had Apprentice Tutors for 3 years now. "We made a decision to take on apprentices as we wanted to offer an opportunity for those interested in working in outdoor education to get a feel for the work environment and develop key skills to kick start their career in outdoor education. With FSC, our apprentices get an insight into the world of work, learn from experienced colleagues and get the support they need from the rest of the team. Coming in as an apprentice allows for more observation time to develop your skills, rather than being expected to teach from day one", explained Kayleigh.

For those who are interested in working as an instructor, it's not necessarily easy to see how to gain the experience and

qualifications you need. Emily Yelland said, "I wasn't quite confident enough to apply as an instructor – my experience working in centres had been volunteering, equipment checks and so on, but not in the lead or instructing". Indeed, the work-based learning that's intrinsic to an apprenticeship is powerful. "I appreciated the hands-on approach to this course - I wanted to be technically proficient and professionally aware in order to pass on my enthusiasm to other individuals discovering the outdoors. Having the opportunity to learn on the job through observations, shadowing and questioning experienced instructors helped massively to understand and appreciate all the dynamics of working in the outdoors", said Emily Fairhurst.

An apprenticeship provides well-paced and structured development as an instructor. Emily continued, "on successful completion of my apprenticeship, the Anderton Centre offered both myself and the other apprentice full-time contracts. In addition, the qualifications gained have directly led to additional 'freelance' work and broadening my exposure to other areas of employment". Emily Yelland is moving to FSC Rhyd y Creau as a full-time tutor and shared, "I wouldn't have been able to get that job directly without the apprenticeship."



Apprenticeship programme design

The world of apprenticeship frameworks was relatively straightforward, because they were intrinsically inflexible. You had a central NVQ and a range of 'knowledge' qualifications to choose from. Good providers would seek out the right mix of qualifications to maximise practical learning and minimise folder bashing, whilst creating opportunities to link in National Governing Body (NGB) training pathways and the employer's own on-the-job requirements.

Now, with standards, we have a core set of knowledge, skill and behaviour criteria to work with. For interest, they can be found [here for the Level 3 OAI standard](#). The only mandatory qualifications are Functional Skills in English and Maths if apprentices don't have GCSE 4-9 already. What this means is that employers can work with their training provider to create genuinely individual training plans that use a whole range of off-the-job training methods, NGB pathways and wider curriculum opportunities. The content and timings of these plans are tailored to meet the needs of the employer's business and activities and give the best chance of making a robust route to competence and successful End Point Assessment for the apprentices.

Kayleigh from the Field Studies Council said, "we worked with our training provider to design a programme that best meets the needs of our apprentices, for example during the year our apprentices will gain qualifications such as First Aid, Lowland Leader Award, Award in Learning Beyond the Classroom, Award in Education and Training and National Water Safety Management. The skills and knowledge they gain from these courses are immediately transferable to their day-to-day work with FSC". At the Anderton Centre the nature of the business is different and this means a different programme for their apprentices. "Our Outdoor Activity Instructor Apprenticeship is extremely hands-on. From day one apprentices become an integral part of the Outdoor Activities Team. We use a phased approach allowing apprentices to be trained, observe, shadow and then finally assessed in multiple outdoor activities, with on-going support throughout", said David. Emily listed the qualifications she covered during her year; "First Aid, Bush Craft training, Paddlesport Instructor, Powerboat L2, Archery GB, HML training... as well as courses that all apprentices do through their training provider like Safeguarding, Prevent, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Mental Health Awareness, Control of Substances Hazardous to Health and Food Hygiene".

Apprenticeship programmes in practice

So, you've taken the plunge as an employer and decided to start an apprenticeship programme. Or you've seen an apprenticeship advertised on the IOL jobs page, applied, and got it. What then? From the employer perspective you'll work

with your training provider to design your programme, decide on a start date, advertise the vacancy, plan the selection process and prepare for day 1. For apprentices, the process looks like an initial assessment with the training provider to establish where you are in English, Maths and Digital Skills; what relevant prior learning you have and if you have any individual needs. All this feeds into your Individual Learning Plan which is developed with your apprenticeship tutor and employer. The first day is your first day of learning and you start with a full induction at your centre in both the job and the apprenticeship programme.



The Level 3 OAI apprenticeship standard was approved with a timescale of 12-18 months. In reality, this is 53 weeks in the training phase before 'Gateway', which is the point where it's agreed an individual apprentice is ready for assessment. Then End Point Assessment is arranged and undertaken, resulting in Pass or Distinction. Timescales can be adjusted to provide for more support with functional skills or any aspect of learning.

Training in any job can broadly be split into on-the-job and off-the-job training. Off-the-job means training whilst at work, but 'away from the workstation'.

In our world that may be shadowing sessions, observing colleagues or doing theory work, for example.

Emily at the Anderton Centre said, "at the beginning of the apprenticeship scheme, you don't appreciate what a wealth of resources are provided to support the course. I felt fully supported with an amazing amount of online material and webinars on reviews, checking for understanding, adaptability, leadership skills and behaviour, games with aims and theories, that I could make use of with different groups. There are open lines of communication with your tutor for any questions, regular in-person centre visits, catch-ups, training and skills days". David added, "the training provides a structured curriculum that aligns with the requirements of the apprenticeship programme and assesses apprentice progress, providing feedback on their performance. This helps apprentices understand their strengths and areas for improvement. Kayleigh explained that with the Field Studies Council, "apprentices will initially observe other tutors both in the classroom as well as out in the field. Over time, they will start to team teach sessions alongside more experienced staff. As their confidence and subject knowledge develops, they gradually take on a teaching load of their own."



The apprenticeship tutor will regularly observe and provide feedback on practical performance in work as well as assessing knowledge and understanding through set work and assignments. This teaching and formative assessment approach builds the knowledge, skills and behaviour at the core of the standard and the role. Unlike the NVQs of old, summative assessment is left until the end. This avoids an issue with frameworks; once a certain observation had been done, e.g., 'briefing a group', the criteria related to this area were marked as achieved and not necessarily looked at again in any formal way. On-programme

summative assessment like this could allow stagnation or even skill-fade in some of the most basic elements of the role. The apprenticeship standard has allowed us to return to a very sensible programme approach where knowledge, skills and behaviours are gradually built up, assessed holistically and supportively throughout, and eventually tested in a single, independent assessment of competence to do the job.

Skills training

One thing that I have always held central in my mind when considering skill development in our industry is how unique it is relative to the role. If I undertake an apprenticeship in carpentry, I may learn how to make a mitre joint and then am eventually assessed in...how to make a mitre joint. If I undertake an apprenticeship in outdoor activity instructing, I may learn how to paddle an open canoe and then I am eventually assessed in... teaching other people how to paddle an open canoe, or perhaps using open canoeing to teach people about themselves, each other and their environment.

This has informed the many conversations I have had about developing an apprenticeship that bolts together the many vital personal skill qualifications from our NGBs. Each NGB certainly has robust and high-quality pathways to becoming a well-rounded and highly skilled practitioner. However, there is some distance to travel in every discipline before reaching instructional level. For an individual new to outdoor activity instructing, we should start with the core knowledge, skills and behaviours to be a good instructor and develop personal skills in step with that. This philosophy not only underpinned the work of the sector Trailblazer group but was also at the heart of apprenticeship reform.

In designing an individual learning plan, the training provider will work with the employer to identify what personal skills progression is needed, and when to meet the needs of the business. NGB skills training, personal experience and instructing qualifications are built into the training plan accordingly.

The impact

What difference do apprenticeships make in workforce development?

“Overall, apprenticeships have helped the Anderton Centre develop a skilled and competent workforce, which has led to increased productivity and efficiency. Furthermore, we reduced staff turnover and recruitment costs as a result of hiring apprentices. Our apprentices have diversified our workforce and helped build stronger ties with our local communities”, David neatly explained. He continued, “our apprentices have helped create a pipeline of talent. Hiring apprentices allows us the time to nurture individuals who have the potential to become valuable employees over the long-term. Apprenticeships have been a cost-effective way of developing staff. Our apprentices learn on the job and contribute to Anderton’s productivity even during their training period”. Kayleigh shared the Field Studies

Council perspective – “our retention rate is approximately 80% and those that choose not to stay or apply for full-time positions are usually those that decide to do further training such as a PGCE. Most of our apprentices secure full-time positions within the first 6 months working for FSC. Almost all of those that have left us have gone on to further work in education or the environment. At FSC we feel that apprenticeships are an effective way of training incoming staff. They get to learn on the job and therefore are able to take on groups of their own and lead sessions as part of their training. Some of our apprentices have been involved in creating recruitment videos, explaining what their job is and why they enjoy working for FSC, which has been immensely valuable”.



One theme that resonates through feedback we get from apprentices themselves is the opportunity to develop confidence in a structured and naturally paced way. “I learned to be resilient and how to deal with many different situations that can be difficult with groups. I grew to understand that it’s not my fault if a young person is having a bad day, I’m just there to support and provide the best learning experience I can”, said Emily Yelland. “My apprenticeship above all allowed me to build that confidence”.

Emily Fairhurst at the Anderton Centre explained the impact she felt her apprenticeship had on her early development – “building confidence with a foundation of transferable skills, developing my instructor ‘toolbox’, adding and furthering both ‘soft and hard’ skills, networking; opportunity to meet both like-minded people and those from a different outdoor perspective, has helped to accelerate my own knowledge and understanding. I have certainly broadened my horizons through the apprenticeship scheme - it has opened doors and provided opportunities to work with different groups and provided a better understanding of career pathways and job roles”.



Conclusion

Our sector has a high quality, well-designed, flexible and powerful apprenticeship standard that is steadily gaining traction as a workforce development tool. Employers and apprentices value the opportunities that it provides and speak of the positive impacts it has had for their businesses and their careers.

In this article we have looked at the Level 3 Outdoor Activity Instructor standard only, but we also now have the Level 5 Outdoor Learning Specialist Standard – watch out for this one in a future issue ▲

Employers can find out about providing apprenticeships here - gov.uk/employing-an-apprentice. Individuals interested in an apprenticeship can find information here - gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship. The IOL jobs page is the best place to search for vacancies - outdoor-learning.org/Jobs/Current-Vacancies-New.

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FORA

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR IN N



Lizzy Maskey runs Pippin & Gile, a bushcraft school based in South-East England and established in 2018. Lizzy has been teaching outdoor education since 2013 and moved to formalise and extend her bushcraft knowledge in 2016. Lizzy launched Pippin & Gile after returning from cycling 9000km to Kazakhstan unsupported. When not cycling or teaching Lizzy is always looking to learn and develop and can be found exploring hedgerows and muddy puddles across the UK and around the world.

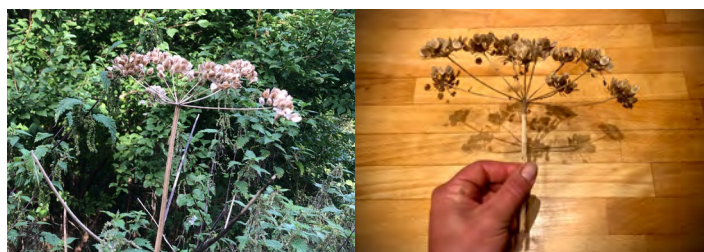
As the daylight hours fade and the temperatures drop it can feel like the best of the year is behind us, and the temptation to curl up in front of the fire grows. However, there is still some wonderful wild food to be had and loads of amazing interactions within nature to observe.

The seeds of Hogweed (*Heracleum Sphondylium*) are one of my favourite flavours at this time of year. They are available from mid-August onwards and continue to cling to the dried heads of the Hogweed plant for many months to come in more sheltered spots. This seed gives an incredible depth of aromatic flavour, perhaps one you are more likely to anticipate in spices found in Asia than in UK meadows.

Words of caution, the carrot family all have the potential to cause photosensitivity burns to the skin, this is most noticeable in Giant Hogweed, but Hogweed sap has a higher level of photosensitivity than much in this family. However, the seeds do not contain the sap of this plant and at this time of year the leaves and stem have died back so you're unlikely to come into contact with the sap from the Hogweed plants. Secondly, Hogweed seeds have been known to cause an allergic reaction in people with asthma. As with all wild foods and medical conditions, I suggest you do your own research and, as always with any new food, start off testing a small volume of the plant before consuming it in any quantity. Please also ensure that you are foraging responsibly and legally.

The carrot family is an incredible family of plants with 70 species in the family, including the humble carrot, parsnip and parsley, there are 34 edible species within this family. However, there are 5 that will make you ill or even kill you - so it is not a family to trifle with, but one that can give you great foraging if you take the time to learn to identify your Apiaceae properly.

The stems and seed heads of the Hogweed stand proud over a wide mix of meadows and scrubland at this time of year. They protrude anything from four to nine feet from the ground, depending on conditions and competition. In exposed areas the seed heads have likely already dropped their load, but find a more sheltered spot and the seeds will be sitting atop the heads drying in the sunshine. Collect one head of the seeds, brushing off any resident spiders who have used the Umbellifer structure for easy web creation. They have a strong flavour, so you won't need more than one full head of seeds - I used four of the micro heads to make up the two teaspoons needed in this recipe.



Pheasant Nuggets with Hogweed Mayo and a Hazelnut Crumb

This recipe makes the most of a mix of autumn flavours. With the shooting season in full swing pheasant breast is a seasonal, cheap, mostly free-range, low fat, tasty meat. Sourcing the pheasant; talk to your local butcher and they can usually supply them for you, if not there are a number of online suppliers including Wild & Game and Shaw Meats. If you're happy to process the bird from the feather, a Facebook page called "Giving up the Game" aims to get any surplus game from shoots into interested people's hands at very reasonable prices.

Hazelnuts can be taken from your stores gathered over September and October or, if you didn't beat the squirrels to it this year, imported Turkish ones can be easily bought. Kentish Cobnut's can also be found and buying these helps support this declining industry. The rich aromatic flavours of the Hogweed seeds really set off the darker meat of the pheasant and the hazelnuts add an extra crunch to the covering of the nuggets. Breadcrumbs can be made by usefully using up a stale end of bread - just blitz it in a food processor and gently toast in a pan. Equally, breadcrumbs can be purchased in the supermarket.

AGING

NOVEMBER AND HOW TO USE IT

Serves 3

Ingredients

4 Pheasant Breasts
2 Teaspoons of Hogweed seeds
150ml of Mayonnaise
80g Golden Breadcrumbs or homemade toasted breadcrumbs
80g Hazelnuts

Method

Chop the Hogweed seeds finely using a sharp knife or one of those rocking knives for herbs, making sure to enjoy the aromatic smells released. Mix in the mayonnaise and stir well. Place into a bowl and leave to one side for the flavours to mix.

Finely chop the hazelnuts - I did with a food processor for speed. They should be about the same size as the homemade breadcrumbs.

Mix well with the breadcrumbs and put into a steeply sided bowl.



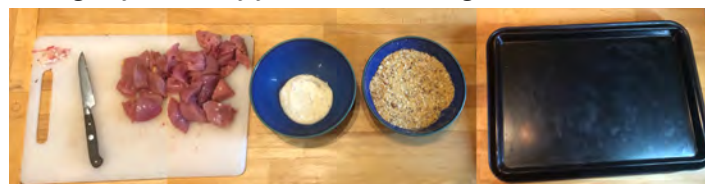
Cut the pheasant breast into one-inch slices. If using chicken breast or a much larger breast, go for one-centimetre slices as this will also give you nugget sized pieces.

Separate out two thirds of the mayonnaise mix and place in a separate container, keep this nearby but you won't use

it yet. Separate half the breadcrumb mix too, this keeps it free from raw meat if you don't use it all. Preheat the oven to 200 degrees centigrade, or gas mark 6.



Create a work-flow – pheasant – mayonnaise – breadcrumbs – baking tray (it is likely you'll need two large ones).



Now that you're all set up, pick up the pheasant, and dip it into the smaller mayonnaise container, ensuring both sides have a thin layer of Hogweed mayonnaise on them, wiping any excess off on the side of the bowl may be necessary. Then dip into one of the breadcrumb mixes and finally place on the baking tray, ensuring a little bit of room.

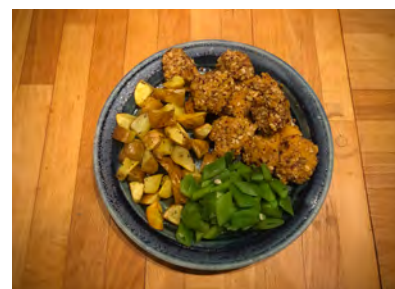
Continue this process until all the pheasant has been used. If you run out of breadcrumb mix, top it up from the other clean bowl. You can also top the mayonnaise up as needed from the larger supply, but be sure not to cross-contaminate with raw meat.



Once all nuggets are made, place them in the pre-heated oven and cook for 20 minutes, turning them over after 10 minutes.

Serve with potato wedges, baked or green beans and the remainder of the Hogweed Mayo for dipping ▲

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Foraging is undertaken at the risk of the forager.



IN PROFILE

KATE O'BRIEN

JO BARNETT (IOL CEO) CATCHES UP WITH KATE TO HEAR ALL ABOUT HER CAREER IN THE OUTDOORS

Jo Barnett: Kate, thank you for talking to Horizons! What is your current role in outdoor learning?

Kate O'Brien: I have a few roles, my main one is Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Strategic Lead with Outward Bound and I am also a Trustee with a local charity up here in Inverness called Àban Adventure Learning Community. I do some mountain bike work as well, mostly with teenage girls running a mountain bike club and leading some bikepacking expeditions.

Jo: Where did your initial love for the outdoors come from?

Kate: Initially from growing up in the Highlands of Scotland, my parents moved here just before I was born because of their love of the outdoors. I had quite an outdoors-y childhood being thrown in rivers and being on mountain summits at quite a young age. And then, as a teenager, I did some courses for individuals at a Centre here in Scotland and that was where my desire to work in the industry came from, I think. I eventually studied outdoor education when I was seventeen at college too.

Jo: When you think about your career, is there anything you're particularly proud of or pleased with?

Kate: Just continuing to grow and develop in new directions, learning new things and being able to apply them in a career that involves a lot of different skill-sets; there's technical skills and your qualifications leading and guiding in different disciplines, but then the people side of it and understanding the psychology of people and relationships, especially young people. I guess the one project that I'm probably most pleased with having developed was the Women's Outdoor Leadership Programme at Outward Bound and being able to put my experience, knowledge and understanding as a woman in the outdoors into a programme that supports other women to do the same.

Jo: Looking back over your career, what has been the most significant learning or takeaway?

Kate: That not knowing, and all the uncomfortable feelings that come with it, is part of the process of becoming competent at something. That's definitely one of the most significant things that allowed me to put myself in stretching situations and develop more skills. Also, that there's something about good leadership that comes from people, relationships and good communication, not necessarily being the expert or having all the knowledge.

Jo: What would be your top tip to someone starting their career in the outdoors?

Kate: I think my top tip would be to make friends with people that you look up to and not to be afraid to ask for help and advice from people who are a wee bit further on in their career journey. People often love to help! It ties in with that thing about not knowing everything and just being comfortable with yourself and where you're at.

Jo: What do you think is going to be important for the future of outdoor learning?

Kate: More young people having access to the outdoors. So many young people don't have that opportunity or don't have access and I think there's a massive connection there with the climate crisis and young people's mental health and wellbeing. I think these opportunities can give young people proactive ways of managing their mental health, or give them a sense of agency with the environmental crisis. Also, it's important to continually ask ourselves who the outdoors is for and who feels comfortable in our outdoor spaces; regardless of background or identity, young people should feel that they're welcome and that they can be in the outdoors in a way that is right for them.



Jo: You're working on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) with the Outward Bound Trust - tell us a little more about that role.

Kate: We've been thinking about recruitment and about consciously creating pathways for groups that are under-represented. That's where the Women's Leadership programme came from. We also ran a programme called the Right to Explore (see Horizons #100 for a Q&A with Kate on the Right to Explore programme), which is an entry level 12-month leadership programme for young people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Then there's the organisational strands of my role, like developing a strategy for Outward Bound which ensures the Trust becomes more equitable, diverse and inclusive, which includes things like training for managers, EDI Champions and introducing a new value explicitly stating that we want everyone to feel valued, welcomed and encouraged to be themselves. I've definitely seen a change over the last five years in terms of demographics; we've moved from 20% of staff being female to 30% and it's slightly higher in a couple of the centres too. Ethnic diversity has shifted slightly too.

There has also definitely been a shift in the way people are talking about it, thinking through the lens of equality and diversity. For example, in centres people are consciously thinking about how to ensure young people from the LGBTQIA+ community feel welcome. How do we work with transgender young people to make sure that their experiences are welcoming? Or how do we provide information and resources for young people from various religious backgrounds? Staff are creating prayer spaces, a lot more thought has gone into religious fasting times such as Ramadan and we have kit such as sports hijabs or niqabs for people to borrow. So, there's lots of thoughtful conversations happening at lots of different levels too.



Jo: What's next, Kate?

Kate: Well, I'm currently working on a five-year strategy for Outward Bound on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Then, in Inverness, I'm just loving running this teenage girl's mountain bike programme and hearing from the girls, where they want to take it. They're really keen to do some more expeditions, so it's really nice staying connected with that practical local community-based stuff as well as the strategic organisational stuff. So, over the next few years I just hope to keep that breadth of connection using different skills and in different parts of the sector.

Jo: Thanks so much for talking to us, Kate ▲

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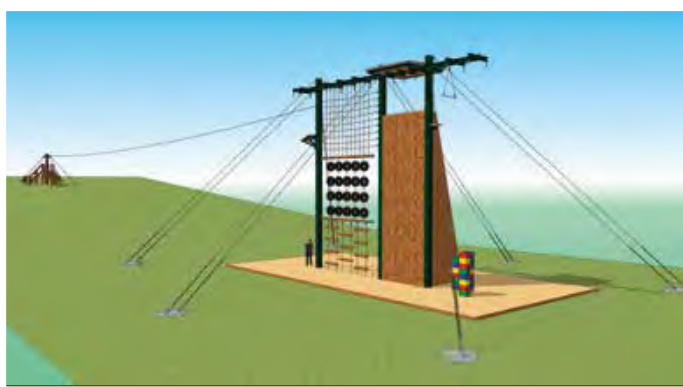


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