



Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education

March 2017

### **CHAIRS REPORT 2016-17**

We started out the blocks at our 2016 AGM with lobbying Education Scotland to retain OL DO and then working to secure partners to joint fund the post. Ironically, 9 months later Depute First Minister answered parliamentary question by claiming the OL DO as their support for outdoor learning.

In my opinion securing this post at this time is the single most important thing SAPOE has achieved in my 21 year membership. We haven't secured transition to further DO commitment but it did mean effective representation within Education Scotland's transition to their new structure, new website and new improvement focus and attainment gap agenda. The rate of change in both ethos and personnel has been ruthless. I'd like to thank SAPOE reps for committing to this and in supporting the Ed Scot DO this year. Despite putting ol in the new attainment gap rhetoric, I have concerns at the remaining Ed Scot staff capacity, understanding and commitment to lead ol nationally, there is however potential through better LA collaboration with our Ed Scot Attainment Advisors to highlight and share the impact of learning outdoors. I urge colleagues again, to open this dialogue locally for everyone's benefit.

The Gov have continued austerity revenue spending and reducing LA allocations, meanwhile consulting on future school governance models. Before concluding the governance review however they gave significant Pupil Equity Funding directly to schools. There are undoubted similarities with English education initiatives, which have/will make funding centralised LA support services like ours more difficult.

There has also been significant opportunity this year for SAPOE to argue the special significance of ol in closing the gap over traditional classroom learning; integral health & wellbeing, experiential, memorable, social, engaging learning where years of sitting in a classroom has failed. However it has been very difficult to be heard above the furore at all levels.

Despite an enjoyable first joint meeting with OEAP this year, I have a growing feeling we have moved further from collaboration with England and Wales. Differences are appearing through the rather confusing HSE UK AA Licensing review; Scot Gov have consulted twice and already established a clear view of Scottish priority and ambition. However attainment research emerging from all countries is increasingly collaborative and the Learning Away Consortium has the potential to bring positive focus and further joint work.

SAPOE continue to attempt to steer national strategy and local implementation of outdoor learning and off site visit safety and continue to represent local authority interests in 2016 through the Scottish Government's National Network for Outdoor Learning and on a wide range of governing bodies and national networks.

The Career Long Professional Learning in the three sectors; Early Years, Primary and Secondary has been rolled out to many local authorities and is raising the impact of teaching outdoors across the country.

SAPOE continue to maintain and implement the national guidance "Going Out There- Scottish Framework for Safe Practice in Off-Site Visits" [www.goingoutthere.co.uk](http://www.goingoutthere.co.uk)

The website continues to maintain a national virtual presence and the Twitter account likewise; I'd like to thank Dr Natalie for her great work.

I'd lastly like to thank Jane and Ali for keeping me going for longer than I should have and all you SAPOE reps who have made this an incredibly passionate, resilient and relevant organisation for the 21 years I have had the pleasure to participate and contribute.

Yours sincerely, Willie White, Chairperson