

SAPOE Chairs Report by Tim Pickering – 3rd March 2026

We reach the point in another year where I am pleased to tell you about our journey towards our key themes and achievements. I had a bit of an interesting end to my year needing a trip to the “plumbers” for heart surgery, I am very grateful to Ali, the Exec and others for continuing the great work. Looking back, I am always amazed what has been achieved from the collective and I say each time I deliver this; we can affect change as a collective, and if we all do a little, we can achieve a lot.

Strategic Progress and Vision: We continue to make significant strides toward our ambition of transforming Scotland’s education landscape where every young person has access to high quality outdoor learning. Our vision remains focused on a Scotland where outdoor learning is available to everyone through leadership, development, and policy influence.

Legislative Milestone: A major highlight this year was the passing of the Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill in December. This legislation recognises inclusive residential and adventure experiences as an essential part of a progressive curriculum. We have made it clear we are ready to help make this a reality for all our young people.

Celebrating 50 Years: We celebrated our golden jubilee, marking 50 years since in 1975 outdoor education advisors first came together to champion and support outdoor learning across Scotland. This milestone was highlighted by our successful anniversary conference at Comrie Croft in November. Which sadly I missed due to the vagaries of living on an island and ferry travel.

Membership Growth and Support: Our membership continues to expand; we welcomed four more Local Authority members this year. Member feedback is overwhelmingly positive, with high ratings for our peer-to-peer

support, networking opportunities, and the value of our active WhatsApp group.

Policy and Collaboration: SAPOE remains a strong collective voice, representing the sector on ministerial groups like the Scottish Outdoor Learning Strategic Working Group (SOLSWG). We are continuing to work closely with partners like Education Scotland and AHOEC to develop recommendations for the next decade of outdoor learning.

Updated Guidance and Training: Our working groups have been active in producing updated guidance, including engaging with the Curriculum Improvement Cycle and comprehensive updates to the "Going Out There" (GOT) framework.

We are also evolving our professional learning courses, such as SLO and TLO, to meet current sector needs. Thanks to the groups involved in this they are doing amazing work.

Refreshed Communications: We have successfully enhanced our reach through refreshing our communication channels. This includes a new monthly e-newsletter and a move to LinkedIn to better engage with our community. The members survey showed you valued the improvements.

It is great to see such a successful year, again, thanks to those who have been involved and I look forwards to another successful year.