

Learning Outside the Classroom: 2010 and Beyond

Amy Nathan, Project Development Co-ordinator at the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, reports from December's National LOfC Conference

This month has seen The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom's (CLOtC) first annual conference and AGM. The event held at Leeds Royal Armouries, one of the first venues to be awarded the LOfC Quality Badge, proved a popular one after reaching full capacity within two weeks of being advertised. Two hundred delegates spanning providers and users alike were treated to a full and varied programme focussing on LOfC beyond 2010 and the potential barriers, both real and perceived, that schools, local authorities and providers of LOfC may encounter as they aim to get more children and young people out and about.

Beth Gardner, CEO of the CLOtC welcomed the audience to the first national conference giving a précis of the key achievements of the Council since it took on the mantle for LOfC early this year. These included:

- Setting up the CLOtC as a legal entity with a full team of staff, systems and infrastructure to deliver the Council's challenging and ambitious targets.
- Undertaking comprehensive market research to formulate the development of the Council's membership scheme which will address the needs of LOfC professionals.
- The success of the LOfC Quality Badge with over 350 organisations achieving this accolade in the first 8 months since the launch of the scheme
- PR and communications with almost 600 pieces of coverage generated up to the end of September 2009 and the development of the LOfC website which provides support for teachers and LOfC professionals.
- Supporting the Sector Partnerships to develop and extend their networks and improve penetration of the Quality Badge.

Beth acknowledged the wide range of organisations and individuals who have contributed to the development of the LOfC agenda over the last year and stressed that our diversity is our strength in moving LOfC forward into 2010 and beyond.

Education correspondent and writer, Hilary Wilce, well known for her columns/articles in the Times Education Supplement and the Independent, opened the event with a keynote speech that both moved and inspired. Drawing on her experience of visiting schools across the country and abroad, Hilary laid the foundation for the conference, recounting stories of young people whose experiences beyond the classroom had changed lives and inspired those who were blinkered about the world beyond their immediate locality. A full version of Hilary's Speech can be viewed by [clicking here](#).

The Council welcomed Judith Hackitt, chair of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), who focussed on LOtC from the HSE's perspective. Judith was clear in her support for LOtC urging the audience not to see health and safety as a hindrance and aiming to give them the confidence to take children and young people out of the classroom without excessive amounts of bureaucracy and paperwork. Judith covered the role of the HSE and highlighted that eliminating risk is not their goal but rather to provide guidance and advice on how to reduce and manage it effectively. Judith's message outlined the benefits of exposing children to risk saying "Life itself is full of risks we cannot avoid. We all survive by learning how to deal with risk; and helping young people to experience risk and learn how to handle it is part of preparing them for adult life and the world of work". Sharing good practice, involving parents and children in the risk management process and the key elements of sensible risk management were also covered during her speech which can be viewed by [clicking here](#).

A key aspect of the day involved the CLOtC's first AGM and the election of the Board of Trustees. This was milestone in the short life of the Council since it took over responsibility for the LOtC manifesto in April 2009. John Stevenson, Chair of the outgoing interim Board welcomed the eight new Trustees, representing both providers and users, and wished them luck as they take on the role of supporting and guiding the development of the CLOtC and the LOtC agenda over the next five years.

A series of workshops were offered to the delegates. Royal Armouries staff provided examples of hands on LOtC and the cross-curricular links that can be made through educational visits to museums and heritage sites. Additional workshops offered guidance on planning LOtC into the curriculum and advice to providers on how to negotiate learning outcomes with schools using their sites.

The day was interspersed with positive messages from LOtC stakeholders including a talk from Martin Smith, Chair of the Outdoor Education Advisers Panel, Dr. Stuart Nundy from Hampshire County Council who has driven a countywide response to LOtC, and the national winner of the LOtC Awards for Excellence and Innovation 2009, Sandhill View School.

Sandhill View was amongst eight schools that were recognised by the annual Awards for their commitment to providing engaging and inspiring LOtC activities as a regular part of the school day. To read more about the LOtC Awards please [click here](#).

The conference culminated in a panel-led discussion on whether the barriers to LOtC were preventing schools from providing more opportunities for children to experience the world beyond

the classroom as part of their school curriculum. The discussion was led by four panellists: Judith Hackitt (HSE), Ken Round (Outdoor Education Adviser for Lincolnshire County Council) Paul Goodburn (Graduate Training Programme) and Tim Sara, (Headteacher of St Benedicts School). Each panellist shared their own experience of barriers to LOtC with topics ranging from lack of confidence amongst newly qualified teachers to the cost of transport associated with educational visits. The discussion was lively and varied, drawing questions from delegates and touching on subjects such as the Quality Badge scheme, recognition for teachers providing good quality LOtC and what steps are being taken to equip ITT students with the tools to carry out LOtC.

Beth Gardner (CEO of CLOtC) commented on the successful event saying “The Council is pleased to see such wide support for Learning Outside the Classroom. This success of this event is a clear indication that people are engaged and ready to take action to drive the LOtC agenda forward. The Council will continue to support its members and the wider LOtC network of practitioners, providers and users to achieve a future that offers children and young people an enriching, fulfilling and inspiring school career that shapes lives.”