

Natural Environment Sector Partnership

In the second half of last year, a number of organisations providing LOTC opportunities in the natural environment took part in a pilot for evaluating the quality of the learning experiences they provide. This was designed by the Field Studies Council and National Association of Field Studies Officers, working alongside a former Ofsted inspector, and was supported with funding from the DCSF. The evaluation looked at a variety of factors, including how the experience contributed to delivering the curriculum, as well as inspiring awe and wonder for the natural world and an ethic to protect it. The findings are now being fed into the DCSF's quality-badge scheme.

Over the coming months, we will be drawing together a range of case studies which represent the diverse contribution made by the Natural Environment sector to LOTC. These will cover ages from early years to post-16, and will reflect the variety of approaches to teaching and learning. To complement these, we will also be producing a short document summarising the main research findings since 2000 about learning in the natural environment.

To spread and share all these developments across the full range of organisations within the Natural Environment sector, we are planning a conference for early spring. If you would like to hear more about this event, or be included on other sector communications, contact the sector chair, Tony Thomas, at the Field Studies Council adt@field-studies-council.org.

The Natural Environment sector is also keen to help arrange a series of larger, cross-sector, regional LOTC conferences for all providers, as well as schools and local authorities, later in 2008.