

RESEARCH UPDATE FOR SOEC WEBSITE (September 2010)

Children's Play and Learning for Sustainability

Fiona Wood, a PhD student from the Centre for the Study of Natural Design, University of Dundee conducted a series of analysis sessions aimed at exploring children's early learning, play at SOEC during the summer of last year. This research study, in collaboration with Scottish Outdoor Education Centres (SOEC), will address whether new activities can be designed for outdoor learning which, whilst continuing to promote the health benefits of physical exercise for young children, will also embrace the educational aims of The Curriculum for Excellence, now considered a necessary basis for a future sustainable society. The aim is to understand these deeper motivations and to design new programmes and activities for implementation at SOEC, which would support and extend learning in the areas without destroying the child's enjoyment, exploration or play.

Off the back of the research Fiona has authored and internationally presented three papers which detail some of her preliminary findings during this study. These papers can be found at the following links:

<http://www.designingforchildren.net/papers/fiona-wood-designingforchildren.pdf>

<http://www.designingforchildren.net/papers/seaton-baxter-designingforchildren.pdf>

<http://www.ead09.org.uk/Papers/060.pdf>

Fiona has also made a number of preliminary recommendations to staff at SOEC:

In support of this research and understanding, Fiona was recently awarded a £4,750 Travelling Fellowship by the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust to visit Outdoor Education Centres and Schools across Australia for 7 weeks this summer (July – September 2010).

During her time in Australia, she visited Outdoor Education Centres in Western Australia, New South Wales and Victoria, observing activities and methods that could be applied in the UK and in particular to her work in Scotland.

Fiona is passionate about the development of educational policies to provide future adults of UK society with an experiential grounding in sustainable practices which will provide a strong foundation of healthy ecological lifestyles.

"The aim of my research was to examine outdoor education in Australia and to ascertain how their experiences could be used for the UK to formulate a strategy which utilises outdoor education as a tool for developing future sustainable societies," she explained.

"I believe the expertise of Australian outdoor education providers can be filtered through UK organisations working in this field for the benefit of all young children."

This trip will form the basis of a report for SOEC which outlines a collection of evaluated designs and recommendations for outdoor activities and programs, aimed to benefit Scottish children aged between seven and twelve.