

CHANGES AHEAD AT SCOTTISH OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRES

SOEC is committed to working with teachers, youth group leaders and others to deliver high quality residential experiences and innovative outdoor learning programmes for children and young people.

Looking ahead, the SOEC Management Committee and Council have agreed that the focus will be on continued refurbishment of our Belmont, Broomlee and Dounans Centres. A substantial amount of investment will go into these three Centres in 2011. By consolidating our efforts on our largest Centres, we intend to develop the distinctive SOEC style of Centre and upgrade them to higher standards.

To deliver this consolidation and continued refurbishment, we will sell Loaningdale House and Centre as well as Glengonnar Outdoor Centre, which is no longer operational. Many people have had wonderful experiences at Loaningdale and Glengonnar and we will be sorry to remove them from our portfolio. However, it is appropriate at this time to consider the demand for residential places in Scotland and the impacts of the economic recession.

There are several aspects to this. The preceding and current Scottish Governments have vigorously promoted outdoor learning and specifically residential experiences;

“Progressive outdoor learning experiences are best delivered through a combination of schools-based outdoor learning and residential programmes.”

Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning, March 2010

Parents, too, appreciate and value the undoubted benefits for their children from participating in residential experiences. After all, many parents have fond memories of their own camp experience and, of course, they currently pay for their child to attend a residential experience.

However, we must be conscious of the impact of the economic downturn and that it will have an adverse effect on many parent's ability to pay. We foresee a long future for SOEC and it is important that we strengthen and safeguard the charity and continue to improve the residential experience.

We have plans for new activities to come on stream over the next few years to complement the exciting range of programmes available and to deliver all Curriculum for Excellence outcomes. At our Centres, we will improve accommodation and other facilities, installing en-suite facilities, new energy technologies and high levels of insulation, and make other improvements to take the standard of comfort to new levels for pupils, teachers and group leaders alike.

Loaningdale will still be available for the foreseeable future. Regular customers to Loaningdale may have concerns about these proposals and I will be happy to discuss them with you. However, we are in the fortunate position of having three excellent Centres where you will still enjoy high standards of customer care, innovative learning opportunities, professional staff teams and friendly ethos that together make a stay at Scottish Outdoor Education Centres a memorable and unique experience.

Dave Spence, Chief Executive

On behalf of the Council and Management Committee of the Scottish Environmental and Outdoor Education Centres Association Limited