



IMPACT REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

Charity registration number: 1180322

Company number: 11291732

LONGTOWN
Outdoor
Learning
Trust

OUR VISION

“A world in which every young person has the opportunity to build their character and resilience through outdoor learning and adventure. Our programmes will boost health and wellbeing, use activity as therapy, promote healthy social interactions, encourage learning, improve physical capabilities and foster connection with the environment”

Report from the Chair

I am pleased to report that the difficult decisions taken during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and forced closure of the centre to residential groups enabled Longtown Outdoor Learning Trust (LOLT) to survive and thrive in 2021, despite continued financial and staffing pressures. We saw an increase in bookings for residential courses and activities in the traditionally quieter months as well as a very busy summer term, and a continued interest in after school clubs and holiday activity days.

The LOLT team worked incredibly hard to maintain our high standards during these very busy periods and enable children to enjoy learning and adventure in the outdoors. An increase in bookings and activities following the reduction of staff in 2020, combined with the continued uncertain working environment resulted in significant staffing pressures during the year. We are very grateful to our staff for their commitment and dedication that enabled LOLT to keep going through this time. We are also grateful for the support of a number of freelance outdoor instructors and volunteers who bolstered our team during the busy months. Staffing pressures were not helped by a challenging recruitment environment nationally, but we were able to increase our apprentice programme, as well as start to look at new staffing structures for the future.

We were able to make use of the available Covid-19 financial support packages during 2021, which helped keep our finances manageable, and along with our income from residential bookings and courses our year end accounts are healthy.

We remain grateful to our landlord and partners, The Wilson Foundation, for their continued support and dedication to ensuring the young people of Northamptonshire can access residential trips to Longtown and enjoy what LOLT offers. Their support of the bursary scheme we run to ensure that all children can access our activities and residential stays has been particularly important as we have provided much needed outdoor education and adventures following the Covid-19 lockdowns.

During 2021 the board of trustees also took time to look afresh at our strategy for the future. Working with staff and trustees a new 5 year strategy was developed, setting out our vision and identifying our key aims and objectives for the next five years. All of which will help strengthen our work and grow LOLT as a mature well run charity delivering much needed outdoor learning and adventure for young people.

Matt Freer,
Chair of Trustees



Report from the Director

At the time of writing, LOLT's recovery from the huge financial impacts of the pandemic has been strong. However, this situation masks the faltering start and continuous uncertainty in the first half of 2021 as Coronavirus restrictions continued to restrict operations.

Residential school visits (typically contributing 70% of LOLT's income) were not permitted to recommence until mid-May (a later date applied to schools in Wales).

We did as much as we were permitted to do. The after schools clubs and school-based outreach programmes which ran from January to May (whenever Covid restrictions permitted) ensured the continuation of LOLT's apprenticeship programme, delivered LOLT's charitable objectives and shared the positive message that LOLT was very much 'alive and kicking' and eager to welcome back residential visitors again. These programmes also ensured that LOLT's staff remained active as current practitioners. These programmes helped to sustain the Trust both financially and emotionally until residential visits were able to re-commence in May 2021.

A significant strategic development for LOLT was the development of a partnership with Herefordshire Council as a provider of the Government's Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme. LOLT ran a pilot programme at Easter 2021 and has worked with the Council to deliver holiday programmes in the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays since then.

After all the uncertainty of the previous 12 months, we were delighted when the Autumn 2021 booking sheet gradually transformed from worryingly low numbers to encompass back-to-back bookings from schools who appeared to be delighted to be re-commencing residential outdoor learning.

The pandemic has done lasting damage to the school travel sector, particularly in terms of residential provision. This posed a direct threat to LOLT however, opportunities were seized to gain new residential bookings from schools in counties like Warwickshire and Monmouthshire, whose own public sector residential outdoor learning provision was either reduced or removed.

During the year a number of strategic decisions were made that positively impacted LOLT's financial recovery:

1. Implementation of a 'Blanket Bursary' scheme for Northamptonshire schools.
2. Development of archery as a new centre activity strengthening our on-site and outreach provision.
3. Implementation of a revised staffing structure, particularly for Domestic and Catering functions.
4. Development of a new website
5. Introduction of on-line sales via the website.
6. Development of remote Educational Visits training courses when restrictions prevented face-to-face delivery.

One of the most noticeable impacts of the pandemic was that on recruitment. Reflecting the situation in many sectors, LOLT experienced a number of challenges as it sought to build a new staff team to move itself forward to the next stage of development. This in turn meant that the LOLT staff team, ably assisted by a loyal team of freelance staff, had to once again go 'above and beyond' to ensure that LOLT's reputation as a provider of high quality outdoor learning programmes not only remained intact but was strengthened. Significant effort has since been expended on recruiting, training and retaining a strong, professional and well-motivated staff team capable of enabling LOLT to move forward confidently to achieve its Strategic Goals and full potential.

Mike Fawcett,
Director



Objectives and Activities

Longtown Outdoor Learning Trust is a charity providing affordable opportunities and facilities for outdoor learning and adventure to grow the character and resilience of (young) people as individuals and members of society.

As we strive to achieve our vision we aspire to be a nationally renowned centre of excellence for outdoor learning and adventure.

As the nation continues its recovery from the blight of the pandemic, LOLT had made a strong contribution to the recovery process. The Trust's 'Character and Resilience' framework clearly identifies the positive outcomes of the programmes on offer:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Activity as Therapy
- Social Interaction
- Learning
- Physical Activity
- Natural Connection

During the year in review, the Trust has delivered a wide variety of personal development courses for young people in line with the mission and values. These varied from one day activities to weeklong residentials. The majority of courses were aimed at young people at school and are around 5 days in length. Our multi-activity outdoor education courses aim to promote resilience, self-confidence, consideration for others, caring for the environment and the benefits of an active outdoor lifestyle. This comes from enjoying the successes achieved through personal endeavour and working together in wild and beautiful landscapes.



Ensure strong and resilient finances

- 1.1 To develop strong and secure finances
 - 1.2 To build financial reserves for future projects
 - 1.3 To fundraise to enable a broad range of users to access programmes through bursary support
- Develop and sustain the LOLT team

Develop and sustain the LOLT team

- 2.1 To build and continually develop a strong and resilient staff team
- 2.2 To develop and sustain a community volunteer network

Improve the centre's buildings, grounds and facilities

- 3.1 To increase the centre's catering and dining capacity
- 3.2 To continue the ongoing improvement of existing facilities to maximise the value of our location
- 3.3 To develop facilities for new onsite activities
- 3.4 To improve the efficiency of maintenance processes
- 3.5 To reduce the centre's carbon footprint
- 3.6 To improve the centre's ICT connectivity and infrastructure
- 3.7 To improve the site security to deter intruders and theft

Communicate the impact and value of outdoor learning & adventure

- 4.1 To advocate the impact and value of outdoor learning & adventure
- 4.2 To capture and communicate the impact of LOLT
- 4.3 To develop our capacity to communicate and market ourselves effectively
- 4.4 To grow the network of local adventure provision for teenagers



Achievements and Performance

Despite the huge impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Trust has continued to achieve its charitable purposes through the following activities:

January – May: After school clubs, 'outreach' work in schools, Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) pilot programme, Longtown Llanthony Loop fell race

May – July: Resumption of School residential programmes, day visits, weekend programmes for youth organisations

August: HAF programmes, community day activities, charity residential programmes

September – December: A growing number of school residential bookings alongside an extensive programme of after school clubs.

The year in numbers:

1400

1400 adults, children and young people attended residential courses at the centre (NB. This figure was lower than previous years as Government Coronavirus restrictions only permitted school residential visits to re-commence in May 2021)

250 adults, children and young people attended non-residential day courses and events at the centre

250

100

100 school children attended outreach programmes delivered in their school grounds and local area at 3 schools and for 4 different year groups

105 children and young people attended evening adventurous activity clubs run by the centre. 7 clubs were run across 5 different schools in both England and Wales.

105

The Summer Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme provides a specific example of how the Trust achieves its charitable objectives: 52 eligible children attended at least 1 day of activity on the Longtown programme. The programme ran for 4 days per week across 4 weeks of the summer holidays with some children attending up to 3 weeks (i.e. 12 x 4 hour days) of activity.

On each day of the summer programme there were also up to 24 fee-paying children attending the holiday programme with opportunities for making new friendships and trying new activities together within the constraints of the centre's coronavirus operating procedures.

Over the course of each week of activities the children had the opportunity to engage in a range of adventurous and outdoor activities both on-site (e.g. Stand Up Paddleboarding, Archery, High Ropes courses, Shelter Building) and off-site (Stream scrambling, hill-walking). For many children this was their first opportunity to experience these activities or indeed to be 'immersed' in the countryside. This was particularly significant when the impact of lockdown has disproportionately affected financially disadvantaged families. The activities on offer were both Enriching and Physical.

Healthy hot meals were provided for the children 3 days each week, with children learning the skills of choosing and preparing their own healthy packed lunch on the 4th day.

Excerpts from the centre's on-line feedback forms:

"My children had an amazing time they are 7 and 13 and they both loved all the activities. They would not have had the chance to do these activities if it wasn't for schemes like this - thank you"

"An amazing programme that we wouldn't have attended or had knowledge of without the council offer of free activities."

"My child felt a sense of achievement for attending this programme"

"My child took part in activities they would not have had access to without this programme"

"My child has developed a better understanding of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle since attending this programme"

A number of Herefordshire schools have an existing relationship with the centre and they were very grateful to be able to 'signpost' the opportunities at Longtown to the families of eligible children. We assisted one particular family through the booking process which had multiple benefits:

From the Head teacher's perspective it enabled a trusted agency to have 'eyes on' a vulnerable child for a significant chunk of the summer with a positive and stimulating programme of activities and healthy food.

The child concerned was not only able to access a whole range of activities that were completely new to him but was able to mix with existing friends who were fee-paying.

Volunteer contributions

LOLT has continued to benefit significantly from local connections and support during the year.

A total of 40 domestic hours volunteered, equating to £380.

A total of 63 instructional hours were volunteered equating to £599.

A total of 28 safety marshal hours were volunteered equating to £295.

In addition Trustees/Directors provided in excess of 250 hours of volunteering time to the running of the Trust.

Our access and bursary policies

Longtown Outdoor Learning Trust is a charity which seeks to benefit the public through the pursuit of its stated aims. Our fees are set at a level to ensure the financial viability of the Trust at a level that is consistent with our aim of providing a first class experience to all participants.

The Trust welcomes participants from all backgrounds. The Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our participants and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. We always provide customer feedback questionnaires at the end of all courses for completion by participants' schools and employers. The comments received are taken very seriously and all questionnaires are reviewed. We are constantly striving to make sure that our courses are linked to relevant objectives and provide a truly educational benefit for participants. We believe our



participants benefit from learning within a diverse community. A great deal of learning occurs through social interaction, conversation and shared experiences which helps our participants develop an understanding of the perspectives of other people that will be vital in their adult lives.

The Trust offers two bursaries:

The Wilson Foundation Bursary – for children from Northamptonshire, funded by The Wilson Foundation.

The Longtown Bursary – for children from Herefordshire and other counties, funded from the Trust's general funds.

Our bursary policy contributes to a widening of access to the courses we offer and the facilities we enjoy. The Trustees view our bursary awards as important in helping to ensure young people from families who would not otherwise be able to afford the fees to access the course we offer. Our bursary awards are available to all who meet our requirements. The bursary awards range in scale from just 1% through to 40% remission of course fees depending on the financial circumstances of the young people in question.

Fundraising Approach and Performance

The principal area of success in fundraising has been that of applying for and receiving funds from Herefordshire Council to deliver the Holiday Food and Activity (HAF) programme. Each HAF funding award is contingent upon the submission of a report that evaluates the success of the programmes. Reports have been completed and submitted for Summer and Winter 2021 identifying considerable success as well as suggestions for improvement.



Plans for future periods

During the year, significant efforts were made by both staff and trustees to develop a new strategic plan for 2022 – 2027. This process had a number of outcomes. The new strategic goals are set out in the 'Objectives and Activities' section of the Trustees' report and the full strategy can also be found at <https://longtownoutdoorlearning.co.uk/our-charity-and-objectives/>

The process also enabled staff and trustees to determine which of the Trust's activities directly deliver LOLT's charitable objectives and which activities need to generate a surplus to support the achievement of those charitable objectives.

This also led to a review of the Trust's policies and procedures related to Bursary support.

Our main efforts in the coming year will be focused on improving the centre's buildings, grounds and facilities.

CHARACTER & RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK

LOLT's Character and Resilience Framework (CRF) identifies the ways in which children and young people can build their character and resilience through our programmes of outdoor learning & adventure. Our programmes boost health and wellbeing, use activity as therapy, promote healthy social interactions, encourage learning, improve physical capabilities and foster connection with the environment.



HEALTH & WELLBEING

We develop children and young people's emotional resilience, confidence and independence through engagement in adventurous activities.

We design outdoor activity programmes that focus on empowering children and young people and promote the benefits of an active healthy lifestyle.

We provide a welcoming and safe environment with clear routines that give children and young people a sense of security.



LEARNING

We encourage autonomy and choice that give children and young people a sense of self worth and encourages self-directed learning.

We develop children and young people's ability to overcome challenges, which builds motivation, perseverance and commitment.

We increase children and young people's cultural capital by enabling them to experience awe and wonder in the natural world.



ACTIVITY AS THERAPY

We support children and young people to establish and develop self-efficacy, improve skill acquisition and performance in a wide range of activities.

We provide challenge with an element of perceived risk, that will develop children and young people's insight into their abilities and potential.

We use mindfulness approaches to encourage children and young people to connect to their senses.



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

We are committed to promoting the link between physical exercise and improved mental health and wellbeing.

We encourage children and young people to explore their physical capabilities, interests and talents and we provide a progressive challenge for all.



SOCIAL INTERACTION

We support children and young people to create positive relationships and promote positive behaviour.

We highlight and celebrate achievements together.

We believe that shared experiences, which allow for group reflection, support the feeling of belonging and being valued.



NATURAL CONNECTION

We believe that connecting with nature supports children and young people to establish strong and supportive relationships and nurtures creative play.

We also support children and young people to develop confidence in unfamiliar environments and build their resilience to challenging situations, which supports them to manage their own risks in the outdoor environment.

Registered Company number
11291732 (England and Wales)

Registered Charity number 1180322

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