

## Report of the Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools Co-ordinator and the Team Leader for Learning and Inclusion

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### Subject: Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools

#### Purpose of Report

To provide members with a review of the work of the Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools partnership and how present and planned activity in this area is being developed in response to the challenges of a new Curriculum for Wales.

#### Introduction/Background

Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools (<http://pembrokeshireoutdoorschools.co.uk/>) was established in 2010 as a collaboration between the Professional Learning Community in Pembrokeshire (including headteachers, teachers and local authority advisers) and key strategic partners including Darwin Science, Sports Pembrokeshire and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority. The initiative aims to promote the use of the outdoors across the Curriculum for young learners in Pembrokeshire.

Since 2017 The National Park Authority has played host to the Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools initiative's Partnership Co-ordinator. There are now more than 15 local partners involved with the initiative, providing support for training and the development of new resources for outdoor learning.

A full-time project officer, supported with external funding secured by PCNPA (from various sources including charitable trusts and Postcode Lottery grant), works with the Outdoor Schools partnership and engages with schools/educators across the County, working collaboratively to support a range of curriculum linked outdoor learning.

#### Activity undertaken

During the year 2022/23 the PODS team worked with 33 local schools (primary and secondary). More than 20 schools are featured as case studies reflecting good practice in outdoor learning across the county. These are available on the Outdoor Schools website, accessible to schools and teachers across the County.

The new Pembrokeshire Schools website was launched at the start of the academic year 2022/23. Over the same period Outdoor Schools delivered 21 training sessions for local schools, with over 170 participants, the majority of whom were teachers. Topics included school grounds development and delivering the Curriculum outdoors.

Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools are active on social media, with a presence on Twitter and Facebook ([\(2\) Facebook](#)). A number of schools share content on the pages, with engagement amongst teachers and schools high.

#### Comparisons

The Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools partnership approach has been replicated elsewhere, for example in Carmarthenshire, where Carmarthenshire Outdoor Schools (CODS) supports

outlearning across that county. The work in Carmarthenshire is based on the Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools model. There are outdoor learning partnerships elsewhere in Wales including the Wales Council for Outdoor Learning <https://www.walescouncilforoutdoorlearning.org/> and the Outdoor Partnership Wales, <https://outdoorpartnership.co.uk/>, but these have a national focus or are less engaged in schools and educators.

Outdoor Schools is well connected with the local teaching community and the practitioners that support outdoor learning locally and so for that reason may be better able to respond to the needs of teachers and reflect local opportunities in and around Pembrokeshire Coast National Park.

Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools is widely recognised as an example of good practice in the field of outdoor learning and has been highlighted on several occasions by Estyn when visiting local schools.

#### Financial considerations

The Outdoor Schools partnership has been able to gain external funding to support annual costs of around £40,000/year in recent years. The budget supports a full-time co-ordinator and the resources required to enable the initiative to support schools. Funding has come from a range of sources over this time including grant aid from Welsh Government, funding from the Postcode Lottery and donations from Charitable Trusts. The initiative receives no support from the local authority at present and has not received funding from this source directly since the partnership was established in 2010.

Going forward, Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools is actively seeking new funding streams for 2024/25 onwards.

Opportunities for income earning are limited, but could include making charges for the training provided to teachers and schools, this would provide an income stream to support a proportion of PODS activity.

#### Risk considerations

The Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools model embraces the value of partnership and collaborative working. Pembrokeshire benefits from the contributions of a wide range of outdoor learning practitioners as befits a county with a National Park within its boundaries. Whilst the National Park Authority provides a significant number of services available to schools, other provide complimentary opportunities for learners, which local schools are able to benefit from.

The new Curriculum for Wales, by common agreement, provides many more opportunities for outdoor learning and also the 'flexibility' to build on themes and topics relevant to the National Park.

There is a clear funding challenge for PODS going forward, whilst the partnership has a good track record of attracting external funding, this is an increasingly competitive sector. In order to continue, the partnership will need to identify new funding streams and sources of support if it is to continue provide existing levels of support.

Pembrokeshire County Council have recognised the value of outdoor learning to schools in the County. At a meeting of the Authority's Schools and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee earlier this year there was recognition that outdoor learning was seen as 'strength' for schools locally.

Additional challenges for the service largely relate to our customer base. The rising cost of transport (coach travel) for schools is a known limiting factor for schools planning educational

visit and this seems likely to continue to be the case. Developing the market for our work represents a challenge, with 'hard to reach' schools and teachers requiring more targeted work in terms of their engagement with outdoor learning.

#### Compliance

Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools services are linked to the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales and support the role required of public bodies by the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. The services comply with the Welsh Language Standards (2016) and we are able to offer programmes in the medium of Welsh. The partnership is able to evidence support for and contributions to the NPA's Wellbeing objectives.

#### Human Rights/Equality issues

Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools activity address key equality issues in terms of access to the natural heritage of Wales and contributes to the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority's own Equality Plan.

#### Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal

Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools has no discernible negative impact on biodiversity in the National Park. However, the content of educational programmes, training for teachers and the projects where the enhancement of sites for learning is an objective actively contribute to increased awareness of biodiversity in Pembrokeshire (amongst new audiences) and nature recovery in practice.

#### Welsh Language statement

The work of Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools is fully bilingual with resources, training and support for schools all delivered bilingually. The initiative has provided targeted support for Welsh medium schools in recent years.

#### Recommendation

**Receive the report and note for future consideration.**

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