

# OUTDOOR LEARNING ASSOCIATION

COMMUNICATION  
UPDATE



OUTDOOR LEARNING ASSOCIATION



# WELCOME

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- 4 Timeline of events so far including where we've been, where we are now, and what will happen next.
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## FOREWORD

We are excited to share the latest Outdoor Learning Association (OLA) update with you. It provides more details on the new organisation, how it will function, what the benefits and resources are, and the membership categories and cost. Plus, we've included an FAQ section responding to some of the most commonly asked questions.

The pandemic proved that when the different organisations in the sector join together and work towards a common purpose, we can achieve outcomes that are greater than the sum of our parts. Our sector has been through a once in a generation crisis that has had a profound effect on young people and the outdoor learning organisations that exist to help them. The crisis is still not over with outdoor organisations facing a difficult future with many complex problems to be solved. More than ever before, we are required to be innovative and agile in our work to respond to the rapidly changing world around us.

This response requires resource, influence, collaboration, and money. The four organisations recognise that they are unable to achieve what is needed now, or what might be needed in the future, without a more joined up approach. By coming together as one we believe individuals, organisations and the sector will benefit by being better placed to share knowledge and expertise, and better able to connect with all parts of society.

We hope that this document is useful and informative as we continue to prepare for a transition into OLA, as some organisations prepare for a membership vote.

Thank you for your continued engagement, healthy discussion and questioning, and passion for the work of the four organisations.

**OLA Interim Management Group**

# WHO'S WHO?

**The Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres (AHOEC)** is a membership organisation focused on supporting and representing leaders and managers of outdoor learning organisations in the UK.



**The Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL)** is a professional membership organisation representing providers and practitioners of outdoor learning and championing safe and effective learning outdoors.



**The British Activity Providers Association (BAPA)** is the trade association for residential and non-residential providers for activity programmes and providers in the UK.



**The Outdoor Council (OC)** is an umbrella body for organisations representing the provision of outdoor education, recreation, and development training.



Nominated representatives from these four organisations formed the OLA Interim Management Group in order to carry out the design, consultation, and implementation work for OLA.

## The Interim Management Group are:

**Dave Squire**, AHOEC Chair

**Jim Whittaker**, AHOEC

**Trevor Quinn**, AHOEC Exec

**Mike King**, IOL Chair

**Andy Robinson**, IOL Special Projects

**Taff Lavington**, IOL Trustee and Interim CEO

**Louise Edwards**, OC Vice Chair, IOL Trustee

**Martin Smith**, OC Chair

**Brian Kitson**, BAPA Treasurer

**Ben Wire**, BAPA Chair

## HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

Your discussion, comments, and questions are valued, welcomed, and needed as we continue this exciting journey of development and growth. Please contact your organisation representatives directly, take part in regional meetings where OLA is a standing agenda item, and consider attending one of the remaining online Information and Q&A sessions. The date and ZOOM link for this online meeting is below. There is no need to pre-register.

**OLA ONLINE INFO EVENT**  
28th September 2022, 7pm. [Join here.](#)

# THE STORY SO FAR

## WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?

AHOEC, IOL, BAPA and the Outdoor Council are working towards a co-ordinated timeline, so they are ready to begin a transition to OLA to follow any required membership votes. This includes detailed analysis of the legal, financial and human resourcing implications in changing the IOL Articles, bank account, constitution etc to being fit-for purpose to support OLA from day-one.



2018

AHOEC conference at Inverclyde #outdoorstogether sharing, discussing, shaping the ongoing convergence

2020

Membership consultation provides significant support to proceed with consolidation

2022

Transitional trustee group formed to create OLA from the framework and mechanics of IOL

2023

Joint sector conference at Yarnfield bringing IOL, AHOEC, BAPA and OC together

2019

Pandemic brings clear rationale for immediate collaboration and future consolidation. OLA Interim Management Group formed

2021

OLA Interim management Group work in partnership with IOL to recruit 'OLA ready' IOL Chief Executive Officer

2022

OLA implemented subject to final approval from all 4 founding organisations



# OLA VISION

The Outdoor Learning Association is the professional body for organisations and individuals who use the outdoors to make a positive difference to others.

Members have a shared vision of outdoor learning as a highly valued tool for developing education, health and well-being, environmental sustainability, inclusion and employability within UK society.

- Professional Practice and Development
- Accreditation and Organisational Standards
- Leadership and Management
- Policy, Influencing and Engagement
- Membership Services

# MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

## MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS & BENEFITS

As a member of OLA you will be part of an influential, highly respected, UK wide professional active leisure and outdoor learning organisation.

OLA will continue the representation, campaigning and profile raising that each of the partner organisations have championed over the years – but together they will provide a more powerful, influential and sustainable voice than has ever been possible before. As is present with the existing merging organisations, OLA'S strength will be the contribution, commitment and voluntary input of it's membership. Your membership will ensure that networking and collaboration across the whole sector can continue to grow, facilitating new partnerships and new innovative ways of working so that more people can access our services and the benefits they offer.

## INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP HEADLINES

- Affiliate/Student membership - £30 (students and individuals in exceptional circumstances and suffering temporary financial hardship).
- Membership of all levels (others currently available) - £70 - payable by annual DD. £80 if paid one-off over the phone.
- No fee to be part of 'Professional Practice & Development' groups. Pay less, or the same, for more.

*Note: Membership of the Leadership and Management workstream is by application and requires the member to be a Professional Member and pay an annual fee of £30, so £100 in total each year.*

## INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

- Affiliate/Student Membership: For those interested in active leisure and outdoor learning, progressing towards Standard Membership, or accessing specialist groups.
- Standard (Associate or Professional):
  - Associate: Practitioners and leaders of Safe and Engaging Outdoor Learning - L3 Qualified, 1 year+.
  - Professional Membership - by application. Benchmark yourself against a level of education/qualification, responsibility and experience working in any area of outdoor learning.
- Chartered Membership (Chartered or Fellow option - future development):
  - Chartered is for Professionals who can demonstrate excellence and quality over time. The journey towards chartership will build on existing professional status.
  - Fellow is for Chartered members with a further 5-10 years of experience and evidence of commitment and contribution to the sector.

## ORGANISATIONAL MEMBERSHIP HEADLINES

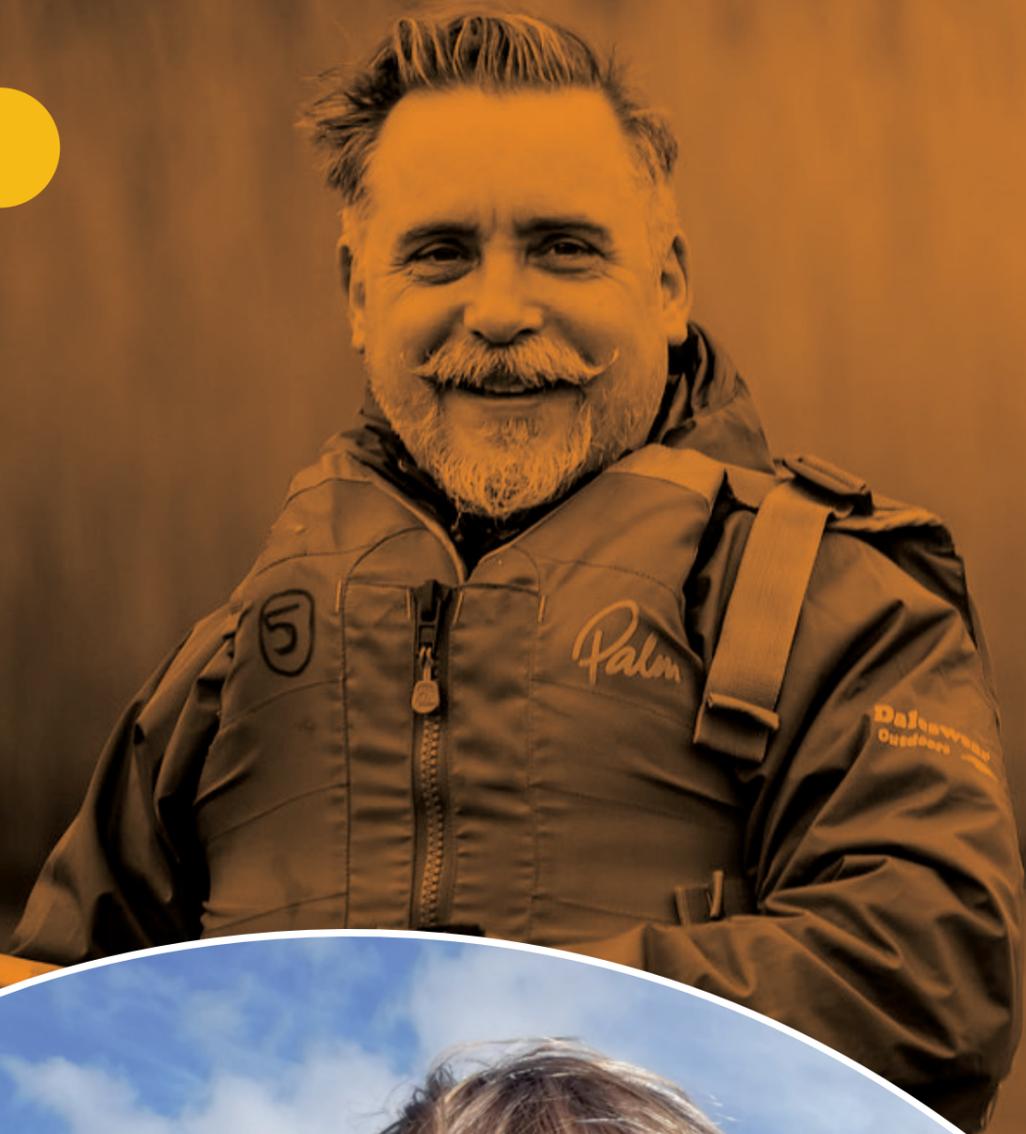
- 3 bands of organisational membership based on the peak number of activity delivery staff.
- Re-shape the job advertising advantage to members as:
  - Level 1 - 1-5 activity staff. £195.
  - Level 2 - 6-20 activity staff. £295.
  - Level 3 - 21+ activity staff. £500.
- All by annual DD or single payment. No monthly DD.
- Each level to have an allocation of free job adverts then a capped amount of discounted adverts.
- Discounted access to inspection and accreditation scheme.



# MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS AT A GLANCE

Benefits marked \* are in development.  
For organisations to access individual member benefits, they will need to opt for an individual membership package for qualifying staff members.

	AFFILIATE	ASSOCIATE	PROFESSIONAL	CHARTERED	FELLOW	ORGANISATION
Value for money membership of a coherent, efficient, single sector organisation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Quarterly outdoor sector magazine (ref IOL Horizons)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Newsletters, social media groups and access to sector current affairs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dedicated office team for member support	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Regional Continuing Professional Development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
National Conference	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Research Hub and academic resource base	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Workforce Development Pathways (ref IOL Registered Practitioner, Accredited Practitioner, Leading Practitioner)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Equity & Diversity best practice support and network (ref INclusivity OUTdoors)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enhanced professional profile	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Advocacy, campaign support, lobbying and PR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
National and Regional representation, meetings, events, and networking		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Professional Recognition & Chartered Status pathways		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Influence and develop specialist areas e.g. via Employers Group, Professional Standards, NGB liaison		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mentoring, advice and support		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Discounts and member offers – equipment, insurance, courses, activities, publications, products and services		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Best practice publications and materials (ref High Quality Outdoor Learning)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Influence research and development in the sector		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Access to professional practice groups, forums and resource bases (ref IOL Special Interest Groups)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Climate Action best practice support and resource base (ref AHOEC Future Footprints)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Representation and political access to APPG and government departments.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sector identity and use of OLA logo		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Confidential legal and Health and Safety advice		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dedicated Leadership & Management forum and resource base (ref AHOEC Groups)			✓	✓	✓	✓
Access to NAHT (National Association of Head Teachers) membership and benefits.			✓	✓	✓	
Professional networking and development with key sector stakeholders e.g. NGBs			✓	✓	✓	✓
Support for funding bids			✓	✓	✓	✓
Enhanced organisational profile						✓
Effective job advertising specifically for the sector (ref IOL Jobs)						✓
Online B2B supplier directory *						✓
HR Support for Business Managers (ref BAPA Croner HR)						✓
Online CPD course platform with free/discounted staff training – e.g. Safeguarding, Customer Care, H&S, EDI, Mental Health, Safer Recruitment, Digital Marketing, etc.*						✓
Access to accreditation scheme assessing safety and quality for providers at different levels (ref BAPA and AHOEC schemes) *						✓
Inclusion on website Organisational Member Map with search functionality and enhanced Google ranking for your organisation						✓
Discounted promotion / marketing opportunities – online via newsletters and mailshots, in quarterly magazine, at regional and national events, via CPD						✓



# HOW WILL OLA WORK IN PRACTICE?

OLA consolidates the strengths and interests of all four partners, coming together to collaborate for the interests of the current membership, for future members, and to develop and grow the reach of the wide range of services and benefits they provide. In practice, this will be achieved through five workstreams.

**1 Professional Practice & Development:** To enable better understanding, development and sharing of good practice and its impact in different areas of outdoor learning. This includes working party responses to sector issues as workforce development.

**2 Accreditation & Organisational Standards:** To support members and providers by identifying standards of good practice within the outdoor learning sector and provide a training, self-assessment, inspection and assessment framework for continuous development and recognition.

**3 Leadership & Management:** Committed to helping strategic leaders of outdoor learning organisations, design, develop and deliver high quality outdoor learning, inspirational experiences, challenging activities, excitement, and fun, all with

a lifelong positive impact. This workstream achieves this goal by striving to create and develop a healthy culture that intelligently balances education, fun, safety, risk, inclusion, challenge, and adventure.

The Leadership and Management workstream is for Professional Membership holders. Individual members will be eligible to apply to join this workstream if they are in a defined Leadership and Management position within their organisation and sign up to observe agreed professional standards. The workstream will include national and regional groups with elected Chairs.

**4 Policy, Influencing & Engagement:** To promote the benefits of outdoor learning, training and recreation to key decision makers and society at large by working with members and drawing together the principal representative organisations operating in the field.

**5 Membership Services:** Capture the membership benefits of the four merging bodies and enable access for all members. Build on this to enhance the membership offer to add value for existing members and attract new members.

## PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE & DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

**1** Support and encourage the running of formal special interest groups established to deliver better understanding, development and sharing of good practice in specific outdoor learning practice areas. Achieve this with representation, administration, promotional (including on-line presence), recognition and accreditation services.

**2** Support and encourage the holding of formal and informal forums to enable practitioners to consider significant outdoor learning-based issues. Achieve this with administration and promotional services.

**3** Support a network of regional outdoor learning research hubs to enable practitioners and academics to consider current and planned research into outdoor learning practices and impacts. Convene coordinating meetings of research hub chairs and national research conferences, including appropriate UK and home nation government and other key stakeholder representation. Achieve through administration, promotional and archive activity, including on-line research facility.

**4** Identify and support key sector development research, need and planned activity working with member organisations and other key sector stakeholders.

## ACCREDITATION & ORGANISATIONAL STANDARDS PRIORITIES

**1** Manage and develop an exciting portfolio of accredited CPD, training and quality standards which are highly regarded in the outdoor learning sector.

**2** Manage and develop accreditation and inspection schemes for outdoor providers which meet Adventuremark and LOtC requirements and are focused on raising and recognising standards for all areas of provision including: technical skills, health and safety, continuous improvement, and outcome driven learning.

**3** Raise awareness of the purpose, credibility, and value of accredited standards within the outdoor learning sector amongst stakeholder groups.

**4** Create a culture of supportive and professional and provider development that inspire and motivate providers to self-assess, improve and progress.

**5** Become a leading organisation in identifying and recognising the standards of outdoor learning provision.

**6** Develop accreditation and standards which pro actively contribute to inclusion and diversity in the outdoor learning sector.

**7** Develop accreditation and standards which make a significant impact on the environmental sustainability agenda.

## LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

**1** Develop and share excellent practice in the leadership and management of outdoor learning organisations by being the de-facto voice of outdoor learning leadership within OLA and the wider outdoor sector.

**2** Enhancing a professional network created to enable sharing and influencing of strategies, views, opinions, developments, & concerns within the outdoor learning providers community. This is achieved through a network of regional, national and UK wide groups of elected Leadership and Management members.

**3** Provide targeted, relevant, and equitable support and representation for members of the workstream in all 4 home nations (Wales, Scotland, England and Northern Ireland) by recognising that each nation has different challenges and opportunities but also common threats and concerns that can be addressed by close collaboration and working as one organisation.

**4** Develop and deliver high quality CPD opportunities through annual and half yearly Leadership and Management conferences. These will provide access to the best up to date information and advice and examples of good practice, as well as giving members the opportunity to influence the policy and direction of the Leadership and Management workstream, OLA and the wider sector.

**5** Work closely with the other workstreams of OLA to develop the sector across all home nations by providing valuable experience, knowledge, and insight from the perspective of leaders in outdoor learning for the benefit of all.

**6** The Leadership and Management work stream is affiliated to the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT). Membership is available to all members of the workstream as leaders of outdoor education regardless of their organisations background.

## POLICY, INFLUENCING, AND ENGAGEMENT PRIORITIES

**1** Provide members with relevant and current information on the state of the Outdoor Learning sector and provide them with a voice that can influence key decision makers at a regional and national level.

**2** Support an advisory Group that can inform this voice and provide a broader representative group to influence our work at a local and national level.

**3** Provide a route for external organisations at a national and regional level to communicate with the sector, e.g. acting as the Secretariat to the Outdoor Learning All Party Parliamentary Group such as The Outdoor Learning All Party Parliamentary Group to represent members when engaging with such organisations.

**4** To encourage the provision of outdoor experiences of the highest quality, safety, value and enjoyment.

**5** To keep societal trends under review, maintain a future focus and identify possible opportunities for the outdoor sector.

## MEMBERSHIP SERVICES PRIORITIES

**1** Design and enable a transition to a simplified and scalable membership structure that captures the needs of the current four merging partners.

**2** Develop a sustainable, cost-effective membership fee structure that reflects member value and supports the operation of a modern, professional membership organisation.

**3** Enhance a professional network, including face to face and online dedicated forums and events, to enable sharing of ideas, views, opinions, developments, and opportunities within the outdoor learning practitioner community. This is achieved through a fit for purpose, technology enabled network of regional, national and UK wide groups of practitioner members

**4** Develop and deliver high quality CPD opportunities that will provide access to the best up to date information, advice and examples of good practice.

**5** Continue to explore routes to enable professionals within the sector to gain individual Chartered status.

**6** Create a bank of best practice/standards/knowledge to help members drive forward outdoor learning for all.

**7** Develop a membership offering that would be valued by potential new members across the sector and allied sectors that currently sit outside the traditional membership.



# HOW IT WORKS

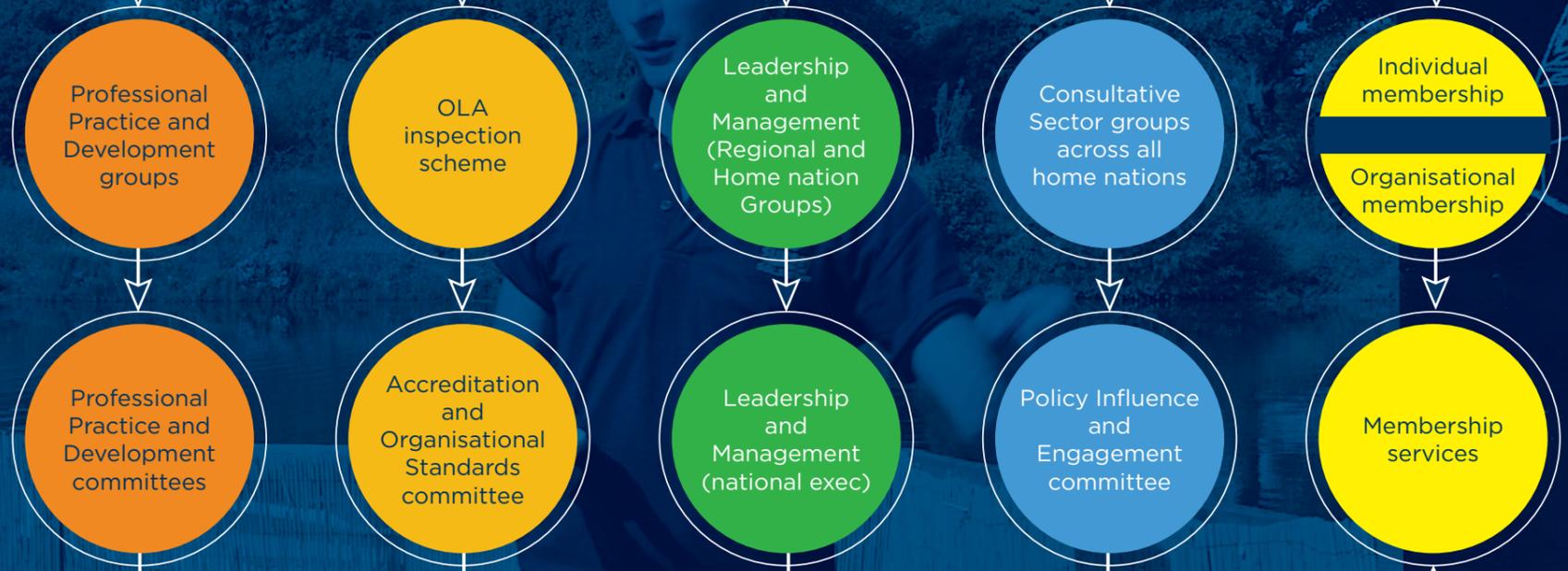


**THE FIVE OLA WORKSTREAMS ARE A PART OF THE PROPOSED INTERIM GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE.**

- 1** Professional Practice & Development
- 2** Accreditation & Organisation Standards
- 3** Leadership & Management
- 4** Policy, Influencing and Engagement
- 5** Membership Services

**OLA members (AHOEC, IOL, OC, BAPA)**

Workstreams open for members to engage with (Leadership and Management workstream has additional membership requirements)



OLA management round table made up of representative members of the workstreams, chaired by the OLA CEO, responsible for organising the work and informing the direction of OLA

Supported by a paid team of OLA staff including CEO, Business Manager and Administration team providing the following services: Membership Support, IT, Marketing and PR

**Elected OLA Board of Trustees**

Responsible for legal compliance and charitable governance

# FAQs

## WHY DO WE NEED TO CHANGE AND WHY NOW?

The pandemic proved that when the different organisations in the sector join together and work towards a common purpose we can achieve outcomes that are greater than the sum of our parts. Recent examples of the sector working together have been:

- The formation of UK Outdoors made up of reps from AHOEC, IOL, BAPA and Outdoor Council to help coordinate a sector response to Covid.
- Creation of the School Travel Sector Stakeholder Group made up of reps from AHOEC, PGL (who funded the work), IOL, Outdoor Council, Kingswood, School Travel Forum amongst others to apply pressure and lobby government during the Covid crisis.
- Formation of the SaveOutdoorEd campaign started by members of AHOEC and joined by members from IOL and BAPA to drum up grass roots support and initiate action to raise the profile of the situation centres were in.
- The formation of an 'All Party Parliamentary Group' (APPG) with AHOEC and Outdoor Council members acting as liaisons to represent and advocate for outdoor learning in government.
- AHOEC Scotland, Scottish Adventure Activities Forum and the Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education working with Scottish government to secure funding and commitment to outdoor learning and AHOEC Wales engaging with the Synedd to achieve similar outcomes.
- IOL with help from members of AHOEC, BAPA and the wider sector developed brand new apprenticeship standards that better fit our sector's needs and have benefited numerous centres with regard to recruitment and development.

These examples show the amount of work taking place at a time when our centres were closed. Each of these pieces of work took a huge amount of effort and commitment from volunteer members that is unsustainable. It is also clear to see that in each of these pieces of work AHOEC had an important role to play as did IOL, the Outdoor Council and BAPA hence the move to consolidate our resources and form OLA.

## HOW DID THE IDEA OF OLA COME ABOUT? WHAT IS IT TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

The creation of OLA is about influence, efficiencies, and reach.

**Influence:** The concept of reducing the number of individual organisations in our sector and 'joining together' has been a regular conversation amongst members for the last 15 years. It was highlighted as a more urgent requirement during the recent Pandemic. During that time it became more apparent than ever that we can be a difficult sector to understand, with numerous organisations, countless acronyms and no obvious path in (or out) for communicating with policy makers or interested stakeholders. The pandemic required a rapid response to address this challenge and OLA is a continuation of the momentum and learning from that response. One of the purposes of OLA is therefore to create a more cohesive and influential voice for the future of the sector that will open doors politically and in terms of how people access the many benefits and opportunities the sector has to offer – this includes addressing the workforce and diversity challenge.

We realise that there will still be other organisations out there representing their interests, but we also have endeavoured to ensure that the structures of OLA are such that should other organisations wish to consider joining at a later stage, that will be possible.

**Efficiencies:** In recent years it has become even more apparent that all the same people from the same organisations are meeting and discussing the same issues both within the sector and with others outside of the sector. Most of this is being done entirely by volunteers and resources are running thin. Based on the diversity and workforce challenges seen across the sector, it is becoming increasingly difficult to see where the future volunteers will come from. There is an urgent need to invest in our work through the appointment of paid staff and formalised roles to facilitate a significantly more sustainable way of working. This will also bring financial savings for members as a result of streamlining the administrative work of each of the four consolidating organisations.

## WHY NOW?

Our sector has been through a once in a generation crisis that has had a profound effect on young people and the outdoor learning organisations that exist to help them. The crisis is still not over with outdoor organisations facing a difficult future with many complex problems to be solved not limited to for example:

- There is a real staffing crisis in our sector with issues around career pathways, pay, contractual conditions, recruitment etc. How can we work together to tackle some of these issues?
- There is a cost-of-living crisis affecting our organisations with energy costs and other costs all rising, with our user groups all facing the same issues, how do we respond as individuals? What can we do as a sector?
- Climate change is still happening, how can we as a sector help our young people to cope with this? How can we model solutions? Where can we find and share best practice to help our members and sector improve their own performance regarding sustainability?

There are many opportunities also for our sector:

- Capitalising on the work under way in Scotland and Wales to embed outdoor learning as a right for young people across all the home nations. This will take a sector approach and having a unified voice will help with clarity and simplicity for those in power to better understand our sector.
- Creating a "best in class" accreditation scheme that fulfils the needs of members, non-members, and our customers with regards to safety, quality assurance, development and makes it easy for those outside of our sector to understand.
- Benchmarking of various areas of our "businesses" such as Pay, Overhead costs etc will be key to helping centres and organisations operate effectively and efficiently.
- Accessing government (UK, Scottish, Northern Irish or Welsh) funding opportunities that arise for our sector. Paid staff have the time to apply for these grants and it is normally the case that these funding streams require a substantial amount of coordination, management and administration that OLA would be well placed to facilitate.

To take advantage of all of these (and more) future opportunities requires a larger organisation and the economies of scale that this brings with paid staff and support for the volunteers that will still undertake and drive a lot of the work. The four organisations recognise that they are unable to achieve the best outcomes for their various members alone and have agreed to let go of the past and embrace a better more joined up future.

## WHO ARE THE FOUR ORGANISATIONS CONSOLIDATING TO CREATE OLA?

The Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres (AHOEC) is a membership organisation focused on supporting and representing leaders and managers of outdoor learning organisations in the UK.

The Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL) is a professional membership organisation representing the providers and practitioners of outdoor learning and championing safe and effective learning outdoors.

The British Activity Providers Association (BAPA) is the trade association for residential and non-residential providers for activity programmes and providers in the UK.

The Outdoor Council (OC) is an umbrella body for organisations representing the provision of outdoor education, recreation and development training.

## WHAT WILL ACTUALLY CHANGE FOR AHOEC IF IT BECOMES OLA?

- The successful consolidation of all four partner organisations will mean that AHOEC, IOL, BAPA and OC will cease to exist under their original names and will operate together as one united OLA. AHOEC will no longer exist as an independently constituted membership organisation.
- There will be a single bank account and a larger but arguably more complex budget to manage which will mean that the financial independence AHOEC currently has will change.
- Organisational decision-making processes will be different given the transition from a relatively small AHOEC Executive Board to a larger structure combining all four partners.
- AHOEC will benefit from paid staff resources and more substantial administrative structures, reducing the unsustainable reliance on volunteers.
- Strategic leaders of outdoor learning provision who are currently AHOEC members will become part of a larger and more influential outdoor learning organisation with the capacity and infrastructure to offer greater benefits to support members.
- AHOEC will be much better placed and resourced to drive forward more of its core aims - 'championing the benefits of high-quality outdoor learning' and 'influencing policy'. The current structure of AHOEC means that these aims do not always get the attention, energy and resource that they require, or again they unsustainably rely on the time and expertise of volunteers.
- AHOEC members will retain all of the benefits they currently experience, gain new benefits, and will have easier access to things like professional standards, accreditation, funding opportunities and good practice.
- AHOEC membership will cost the same or less than it currently does.

# FAQs

## WHO IS GOING TO RUN OLA?

The day-to-day operation of OLA will be managed by the paid staff under a chief executive reporting directly to the Trustees. Direction of travel, policy and development will be shaped and influenced by the membership. The organisation has been structured around five workstreams which will be overseen by the Trustees on behalf of the membership. The workstreams are 'Professional Practice and Development', 'Accreditation and Organisation Standards', 'Leadership and Management', 'Policy, Influencing, and Engagement' and 'Membership Services'. A description of each of these workstreams is included in this document.

## HOW WILL OLA WORK FOR THE COUNTRIES OF NORTHERN IRELAND, SCOTLAND AND WALES, WHERE THERE ARE DEVOLVED GOVERNMENTS?

There are two main parts to this.

Firstly, when issues arise of a devolved nature, specific to Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, they will still be addressed and lead by the local country. OLA will be there, if it is needed, to provide mutual support and resources that can maximise the impact and sustainability of that local work. This could include staffing and administrative support or other mechanisms associated with a larger established formal organisation.

Secondly, the structure of OLA includes a workstream called 'Policy, Influencing, and Engagement'. The purpose of this workstream will be 'To promote the benefits of outdoor learning, training and recreation to key decision makers and society at large by working with members, drawing together the principal representative organisations operating in the field and supporting advocacy at local, regional and national levels.' This workstream will include a nationally representative Advisory Group that will inform the work of OLA at a national and local level. This includes providing a broad, balanced and representative influence to UK Government through the newly established 'All Party Parliamentary Working Group' or APPG. Political influencing will be substantially stronger than it is now as a result. More detail on APPG and other groups is in the 'How will OLA work with and influence the UK Government on matters affecting the outdoor sector?' question.

## WILL THERE STILL BE AN ANNUAL CONFERENCE? WHAT WILL IT LOOK LIKE?

Yes, there will be a range of CPD opportunities for OLA members on offer, including Conference events. Those opportunities will be designed to meet the needs and requirements of specialist OLA membership categories including 'Leadership and Management' members.

## HOW MUCH WILL MY MEMBERSHIP COST?

The same as or less than now if you are a member of a single organisation (for example if you are only a member of AHOEC, or only a member of IOL). Less than now if you currently pay membership to multiple organisations (for example if you are a member of AHOEC and IOL). Full membership costs/offer are included in this document.

## WILL I STILL BE ABLE TO BE A MEMBER OF NAHT?

The National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) will accept OLA members as NAHT members and we are continuing to work with NAHT to agree the set-up of this much valued benefit. OLA members will need to be Professional Members of the 'Leadership and Management' workstream - this is the workstream that is focused on supporting strategic leaders of outdoor learning organisations. The Leadership and Management workstream will be affiliated to NAHT in the same way that AHOEC is now.

## WILL I HAVE A REGIONAL / COUNTRY CONTACT OR GROUP?

Yes, the OLA model is based on country/regional specific networks and subgroups so that the support on offer can best meet local needs and challenges.

## WILL IOL BECOME OLA WITHOUT THE OTHER ORGANISATIONS?

The IOL trustees are currently committed and focused on embracing the consolidation of the 4 organisations, the creation of OLA and all of the benefits this brings. Whether or not IOL becomes OLA without the 3 other organisations will be a decision for the IOL trustees at an appropriate point in the journey.



# FAQs

## HOW WILL OLA SERVE ORGANISATIONS THAT HAVE DIFFERENT INTERESTS AND EMPHASIS - E.G. OUTDOOR EDUCATION VS ACTIVE LEISURE. WILL THEY BE COMPETING AGAINST EACH OTHER?

OLA is being designed to bring together the strength and interests of all four of the consolidating bodies – coming together for the interest of the current membership, for future members, and to develop and drive participation and inclusion across society.

In practical terms, this is how the different interests and emphasis will be served.

- The OLA 'Professional Practice and Development' workstream will provide the space for special interest focus where it is needed, as well as collaboration and innovation across different interest areas. This includes research hubs that can explore and build evidence to support new ways of working – including in support of new cross-interest partnerships that have developed through the diversity of the OLA membership.
- The 'Leadership & Management' workstream will bring together professional members that have an outdoor learning purpose and will retain space for focusing on matters that are pertinent to specific interest, for example residential centres.
- The new OLA Board of Trustees will represent the different interest and focuses of the consolidating organisations. This will mirror the approach that has been taken throughout the development of OLA, where the four organisations have collaborated to prepare themselves for transition and/or membership voting.

The four organisations working together as the OLA Interim Management Group believe that the value of bringing together different interests and emphasis will bring great benefits to members, to the sector and crucially to the individuals and communities we serve. We have a lot to learn across the education/recreation interface and in terms of risk-benefit analysis we believe this far outweighs any risk of competition. The new organisation presents opportunity for a real and useful exchange of quality delivery models, business practice, HR and leadership that can only help us build better operations and grow opportunities for us to better serve society.

## HOW WILL OLA WORK WITH AND INFLUENCE THE UK GOVERNMENT ON MATTERS AFFECTING THE OUTDOOR SECTOR?

A key workstream purpose of OLA called 'Policy, Influencing and Engagement' will focus on exactly these issues and how to best influence and respond to them, guided by the membership and wider stakeholders. The purpose of this workstream is 'To promote the benefits of outdoor learning, training and recreation to key decision makers and society at large by working with members, drawing together the principal representative organisations operating in the field and supporting advocacy at local, regional and national levels.'

This work will be carried out through several new and existing groups. The new groups are the result of political momentum gained during pandemic campaigning. Both new and old groups will be formalised and extended to meet the objectives of the new organisation. A full description of the function of the 'Policy, Influencing, and Engagement' workstream is provided later in this document, together with a description of all the groups that it will contain. In summary they are:

### Advisory Group

Combining the current membership of the Outdoor Council, current devolved nation members of the OLA Steering Group (which has been working alongside the OLA Interim Management Group to inform the development of the new organisation), and individuals by invitation that have specific knowledge and skills to further the purpose of this workstream. There will be no fee for membership of this group.

### Outdoor Learning All Party Parliamentary Group or 'OL APPG'

An APPG is a cross party group of MPs that meet to discuss a particular issue of concern and explore relevant issues. They are an effective way of bringing together MP's and stakeholders to examine policy issues affecting specific areas – in this case Outdoor Learning. This group is currently functioning as a legacy of the work from the pandemic. Going forward, the nationwide stakeholder group within the 'Communications & Networking' workstream of OLA would be the secretariat for the 'OL APPG'.

### Department for Education Liaison Group or 'DfE Liaison Group'

This group has also developed as a legacy from the pandemic work. The group includes Outdoor Council, Outdoor Education Advisors Panel, Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, School Travel Forum and Expedition Providers Association. The focus of the group is Safeguarding and Health and Safety on learning beyond the classroom. It also acts as a link to other DfE departments and other government departments including the Department for Digital Culture Media & Sport (DCMS) and the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). Its potential is far reaching.

### Links to cross UK working

OLA will provide the means to promote an English view on the promotion and delivery of Outdoor Learning, working alongside the other UK nations. In recognising that some OLA members will work across the UK and that within the current membership of OLA, UK Home Nation groups already exist, then support for such members and groups will continue. The role of the Advisory body will be to build on existing relationships developed across the UK and promote continued engagement amongst all the UK nations. Building a better case for the work we all do.

OLA also believes that the Home nations are best placed to develop their own unique approaches with their own governments, decision makers and outdoor sector. In coming together to support each others work we can only benefit from the diversity this brings.





## HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

Your discussion, comments, and questions are valued, welcomed, and needed as we continue this exciting journey of development and growth. Please contact your organisation representatives directly, take part in regional meetings where OLA is a standing agenda item, and consider attending one of the remaining online Information and Q&A sessions. The date and ZOOM link for this online meeting is below. There is no need to pre-register.

**OLA ONLINE INFO EVENT**  
28th September 2022, 7pm. [Join here.](#)

