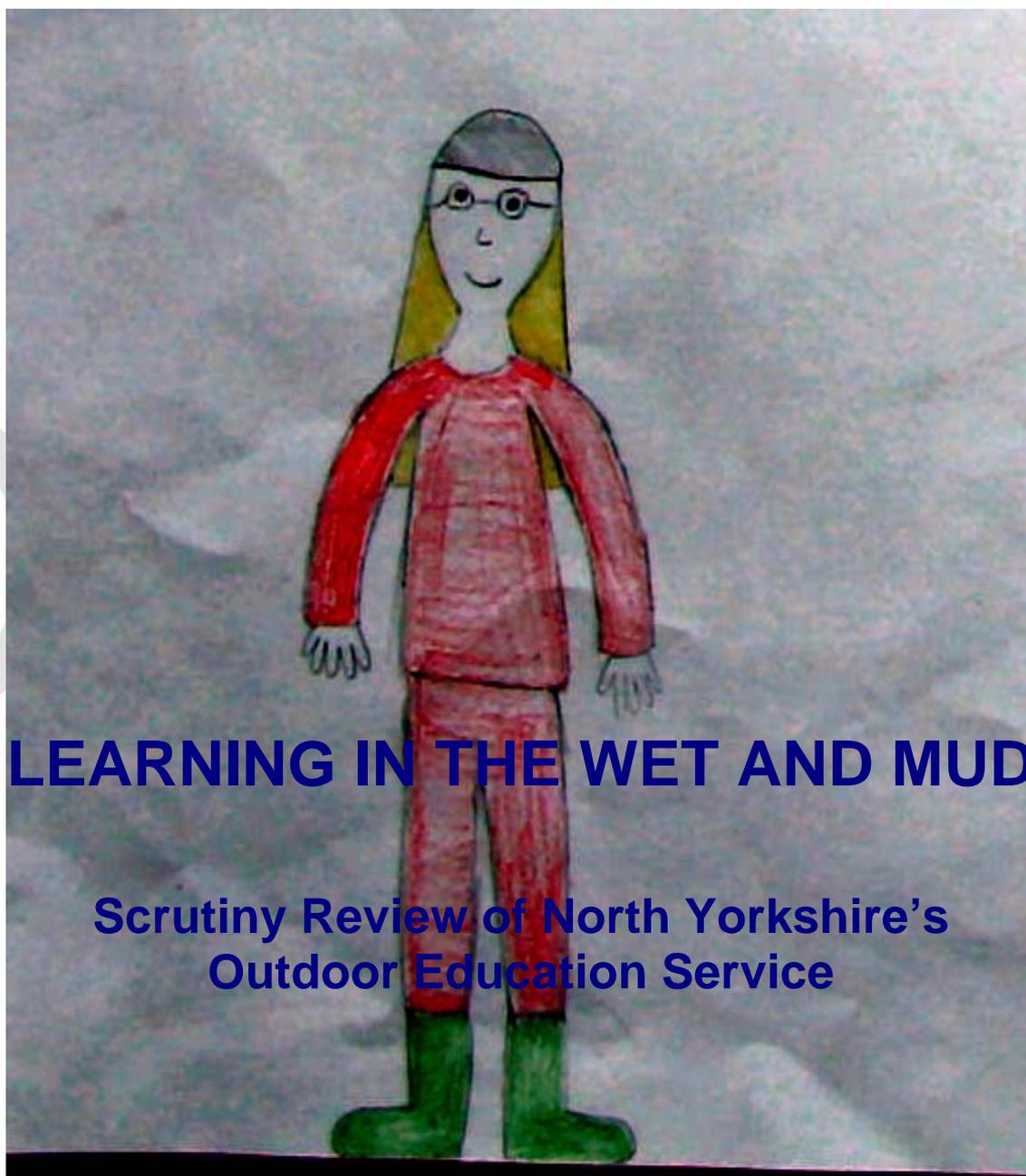




**North**

**Yorkshire County Council**



## **LEARNING IN THE WET AND MUD**

**Scrutiny Review of North Yorkshire's  
Outdoor Education Service**

**JAR - The outdoor education service is highly regarded and well used by schools, offering a distinct and valuable resource for building the skills and confidence of young people.' Joint Area Review of North Yorkshire - Ofsted December 2006**



## *Foreword:*

This timely review of the Outdoor Education Service provides an opportunity to take a fresh look at the Service as it is today and to think about what changes might be made to enable it to better reflect the educational climate of the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. For example, it asks whether other learning opportunities could be provided, whether the customer base might be broadened, how the Service could be made more cohesive and how to make sure that its value is properly understood and recognised. At the same time the financial issues facing the service were kept in mind. Most of the recommendations are not intended to provide definitive answers but rather to offer food for thought and ideas that might be developed.

There is much evidence to support our view that lifelong skills are learnt through the experience of outdoor education. The confidence and satisfaction gained from overcoming physical challenges can not be underestimated. During a stay at an Outdoor Education Centre, young people develop leadership skills and team working by, for instance, tackling tasks that can not be achieved alone. Convincingly, research tells us that out-of-classroom education enriches the curriculum and can improve educational attainment. Often it is young people who do not excel in the classroom that discover talents and capabilities outdoors; they gain a new confidence and status amongst their peers that they take back with them to the classroom. For many pupils their week at an Outdoor Education Centre is amongst the most memorable of their school days, some say it changed their lives.

The Joint Area Review Inspection in September 2006 viewed our outdoor education service as 'highly regarded and well used by schools, offering a distinct and valuable resource for building the skills and confidence of young people.'

The Task Group visited all the outdoor education centres run by the County Council and were left in no doubt that young people, parents, head teachers and governors of schools using the Service hold the Service in high esteem and are very supportive of it. This was backed up by a visit by the Task Group to one of our Primary Schools following a visit to one of the Centres. We were able to see for ourselves the close link between learning in the outdoors and in the classroom and the quality of the work resulting from the visit.

This Scrutiny Review takes a holistic look at the strengths and opportunities open to the Outdoor Education Service. In order to be informed and to draw a comparison it was important therefore, to take a look at a private sector provider and a voluntary sector organisation both of which are used by North Yorkshire schools. The findings from these visits demonstrated the differences between them in the service offered and in their customer base. We learned, for instance, the difference between an outdoor education service and an outdoor activity centre.

This has been a significant piece of work and it has been enlightening. It is anticipated that this report will contribute to and inform future decisions or developments in the Outdoor Education Service. Outdoor Education is an integral part of achieving the five key outcomes under Every Child Matter. It offers a range of experiences that help to develop the capabilities of each child that will lead to improved outcomes and opportunities for them in adulthood.

Each year it becomes harder to make sure the Education Service in North Yorkshire remains in the premier league of Education Services nationally, I believe that the value added by the Outdoor Education Service makes a significant contribution to keeping it up there.

I would like to personally thank all those people involved in this Scrutiny Review, without their help this review would not have been complete. These include officers from NYCC, in particular Pippa Manson, Head of the Outdoor Education Service and all Managers and Staff at the Centres. I also thank the Head Teacher, Chair of Governors and children from Newby &

Scalby Primary School for their wonderful project work; the Manager and Educational Director of Winmarleigh Hall; Simon Hills, Chief Executive and David Sharpe, Director of Operations, Carlton Lodge, Thirsk and finally members of the task group; members of the Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Stephanie Bratcher, Scrutiny Support Officer.

*County Councillor Heather Garnett*

*Chairman Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee*

*July 2007*

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The focus of this review has been to take a holistic look at the strengths and opportunities of the Outdoor Education Service. This involved visit to all the NY centres both in and out of the County and importantly, it included visits to a public sector and a voluntary sector provider both of which are used by North Yorkshire Schools. The main purpose of this Review is to assist and inform the process through which future decisions or developments in the Outdoor Education Service are made.

The North Yorkshire Outdoor Education Service has a number of special characteristics. It offers outdoor learning sessions in a range of sports such as canoeing, archery, dry-slope skiing, hill walking, orienteering and sailing. Many of these involve quite strenuous physical activity and challenge the individual, especially those new to the sport. There are significant overlaps between outdoor education and PE, each reinforcing the other. Most of the activities take place off site giving pupils a taste of a wide variety of physical environments. Each carefully planned session also offers opportunities for learning from the natural environment which adds another dimension to the national curriculum.

One of the main benefits to come from visits to the OES is in terms of personal development. Young people develop their skill base, gain confidence, learn to work with others to achieve a goal, to respect each other and to offer and receive help and encouragement.

There are opportunities for staff to spot interest and potential talent in the taster sessions. Young people taking part in further more advanced courses can build on their earlier experiences and be helped to pursue their interest via the club system. The identification and nurturing of gifted and talented young people is a role that could be further developed within the OES.

There is no doubt that the North Yorkshire Outdoor Education Service is highly valued and well supported by head teachers, school governors, young people and parents. However, it is facing financial issues that require action to be taken if it is to avoid going into a deficit in 2009/10 and beyond.

The Service is funded by the County Council whose contribution in 2006/07 was £859K. However, in line with the agreed budget strategy, this reduced to £778K in 2007/08 and to £728K in 2008/09 - a cumulative reduction of £150K. The Service also receives income from NYCC schools, from out of County schools and from non school use.

To turn now to private and voluntary sector providers visited by the Task Group, there was a clear contrast between what is offered by NYOES and both the private and the voluntary sector centres visited, our findings are summarised below.

Firstly the private sector, provision takes place in the grounds of the establishment and there is no or very little off-site activity offered. There is little or no educational content that relates to the national curriculum (a specialist IT module is offered). All tuition is by tutors not teachers many of whom are trained by the company, many of them are at the start of their working lives.

Comment - whilst there is no doubt young people enjoy the experience at Winmarleigh and many find the experience physically challenging and gain from the experience personally. It is notable that the visits offered by NYOES have much greater depth.

A school's teachers on an NYOES visit are expected to accompany children on the activities. In contrast, at Winmarleigh, whilst this is preferred, it is not an expectation and as the site is closely contained teachers are not far away so they often choose to do their own thing. This means that there is less opportunity for the development of the shared experience and team building aspect of a visit which is a significant part of a NYOES visit.

The cost per residential stay during the high season is more expensive than the County Council's service. In the low season flexible arrangements are made, for example, to accommodate individual schools that want two or three day bookings.

All administration, marketing and booking processes are undertaken centrally by the parent group.

Staffing and pay structures are very different and employment contracts are mainly seasonal, based on a 40 hours per week, live-in. Teachers are not employed. It is not possible therefore to make comparisons with the OE Service.

Secondly, the voluntary sector, this sector has an ethos more similar to our own but like Winmarleigh Hall, at Carlton Lodge the outdoor activities take place almost exclusively on site although off site activity can be organised on request. The centre mainly caters for youth groups but has some capacity for school groups. Education is not offered here although often youth workers come with the groups who are able to undertake quality work with the young people.

The centre is not aiming to do the same thing as the NYOES, but offers a different experience.

Staffing structures and pay are again not comparable with the OE Service

**Observations and suggestions following visits and consultations with staff at the North Yorkshire Outdoor Education Centres:**

1. The OE Service has committed and professional staff working in all its Centres but there is a concern that the current skill mix and staffing structures are disproportionate and need reviewing.

2. The Service is moving towards a more integrated approach but there is still more work to be done on booking and office administration processes.

3. Whilst NYEOS has a booking system, in practice, each centre has developed its own methodology which has led to a non standard but flexible approach that, for example, permits schools to change their booking at a late date which may result in a consequential loss of fees to the centre.

4. There is potential for the administration, booking and invoicing functions to become centralised. This would not prevent centres from liaising directly with Schools but would detach them from such administrative tasks as collecting cancellation payments.

5. The existing level of usage does not currently cover costs however the Team thought there was capacity to increase use by a variety of methods but that to do so they thought there was a need to broaden the user base and to consider adding to the courses on offer. It is notable that only one or two schools use the Service for older age pupils, most consider the Service to be for younger pupils; those that do, find that the Service contributes to their aim of developing the potential in every child.

6. Capacity - The Team thought that the accommodation was not always used as fully as possible, partly because of a lack of flexibility in the accommodation available but also due to booking difficulties. It was also thought that weekends, holiday periods and day time use of centres (empty as activities take place off site) could be better utilised. At present the Service seems to be thought of as a peripheral Education Service rather than corporately as an asset that could be used, for example, for staff and Member training days. Other suggestions for further use of the centres might be Summer Holiday Activity Day Camps for instance for specialist groups of young people such as LACs or young carers, (key activity in the Children & Young Peoples Plan: Objective 3.1 to provide a greater range of informal learning opportunities through out of school, residential, holiday and weekend provision). Taster Sessions could be offered for Schools not currently using the service and Open Days for the local and wider communities.

7. Further links with the 4Youth Service to expand on the OP4U project would be in line with the Youth Plan Objective 1.1.C. (*increased involvement with the Outdoor Education Service through the development of 'extreme' sports*).



8. Curriculum - Currently the Service focuses on physical activities. It may be that a menu of options including Field Studies could be developed to address contemporary issues such as climate change and cultural studies. Partnering arrangements with other NYCC services and other organisations including National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, World Heritage Site Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal, Countryside Services, Learning Through Landscapes, local specialist community groups, local history museums (eg community heritage groups, wildlife conservation groups) could help deliver on these topics. On the physical activity side, close working with School Sports Partnership, North Yorkshire Sport, YOT and out of county groups could be of benefit to the OE Service.

9. Additional facilities at the Centres might include the creation of wildlife gardens to study biodiversity and small scale renewable energy projects which would back up off site study of these topics. Quiet areas outdoors could be set aside for small group work or just for 'time out'.

10. As yet, the urgent upgrading of residential accommodation at all the centres has not been completed nor has there been a decision regarding the use of the Wrea Head Trust monies. It is expected that this Review will contribute to that decision making process by helping the Service to determine its future direction.

11. Encouraging the Corporate Client is more challenging, but there is the potential to develop partnership working with Hotels/Guest Houses in and around the Centres for accommodation only packages.

Note: It is recognised that many of the suggestions would have major staffing, financial and other implications.



## CONCLUSIONS

The outdoor education provision available to children and young people in North Yorkshire is of high quality and is something to be proud of and valued. The Centres are strategically placed within the County except for one centre which is located on the Cumbrian coast. This centre is



conveniently accessed from the West of the County and by using the Lake District Fells for many of its activities it can offer a progressive step in provision especially suited to older young people. A major strength of the other centres is its location' each having easy access to much of the County's spectacular upland areas within which many of the activities take place. There is the potential to develop better links with National Clubs and Associations for intermediate and advanced courses for both young people and adults; some of which is reliant on better or at least improved accommodation.

The core offer could be expanded to include fieldwork options covering important contemporary topics. There may be opportunity to work with partner organisations such as NPs ANOBs, Countryside Services etc to help deliver this agenda.

Since commencing this Review the cost of a residential visit has increased in line with inflation and the Task Group supports this increase. However, in order for the Outdoor Education Service to reduce its year on year deficit further action needs to be taken to increase both efficiency and the income it receives. The following recommendations are put forward as potential opportunities/developments areas for further exploration.

### RECOMENDATIONS:

1	A more centralised and standardised approach for office, administration, booking and invoicing processes should be given due consideration.
2	Adoption of an inclusive approach to encompass children of all ages and from minority groups.
3	Adoption of strategies that make as full a use of the accommodation as possible including weekends, out of term time and during the day when the residential courses are out on activities.
4	Encourage use of the facilities by other groups, eg for NYCC Member and staff training
5	Undertake a review of the skill mix and staffing structures
6	Development of a marketing strategy to project a proactive image, promote the resources available and encourage better links with other agencies, public sector organisations and internally.
7	Consider expanding the core offer to include Fieldwork options that tackle contemporary issues such as climate change and cultural studies
8	Consider enhancing the facilities on site to include such things as

	biodiversity and wildlife gardens and outside creative seating areas
<b>9</b>	Develop partnerships both internally and with other agencies such as NPs, ANOBs, NYCC's Countryside Services that could provide supplementary learning on environmental and cultural matters.
<b>10</b>	Complete the upgrade of residential accommodation as soon as possible and make an early decision on the use of the Wrea Head Trust money.

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The North Yorkshire Outdoor Education Service has four Centres, Beverley Park, East Barmby, Great Fryupdale and Humphrey Head in Cumbria. These Centres have been offering residential outdoor education and activity courses to schools and adults for many years and are well supported by Schools, Head Teachers, School Governors and parents.

The core activities offered by North Yorkshire Outdoor Education Service encompass a variety of outdoor activities taking place off site in the natural environment. The activities generally involve physical activity and always respect the natural environment. Part of the core offer of the Service, as it is at present, is to provide opportunities for incidental learning from the natural environment. There are significant overlaps between outdoor education and PE, each reinforces the other. The courses encourage participants to learn from the world about them and gain both physical and personal skills that they take back with them into the school environment

From a health and fitness perspective, participants have fun and are challenged by participating in the activities which include such activities as canoeing, sailing, hill walking. The enthusiasm generated encourages them to continue to develop their interest in outdoor activities and sport beyond school by, for instance, joining local clubs.

There is evidence to show that young people who undertake regular sport and physical activity show increased motivation and appetite for learning, have an improved record of attendance and demonstrate raised levels of attainment in other areas of the curriculum.



## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The current LEA funded contribution (subsidy) was £859K in 2006/07. This budget reduces to £778K in 2007/08 and to £728K in 2008/09

These figures reflect the agreed budget strategy which is to reduce the NYCC contribution by £50K in each of the 3 financial years 2006/07 – 2008/09, leading to a cumulative reduction of £150K.

The actual outturn in 2006/07 was a deficit of £866K. After taking into account the LEA contribution of £859K there was a deficit of £7K. The Centres' working balances reduced therefore from £394K to £387K.

Budget projections, based on current prices and policies, have been carried out for the period to 2011/12. They assume fee level increases to match the rate of inflation. The projected budget also takes account of the reduction in LEA contribution referred to above.

### Four Centres

	Beds	Teaching Staff (FTE)	Bed Nights (circa)	
Bewerley Park (Pateley Bridge)	130	12.5	22,000	Owned
Humphrey Head (Cumbria)	39	2.0	7,000	Rented
East Barnby (near Whitby)	104	10.0	18,000	Rented
Great Fryupdale (North York Moors)	26	-	4,000	Owned
		24.5	51,000	

Occupancy Level Achieved 2006/07      96%

Composition of Teaching Staff	FTE
Leadership	7.0
Other Teachers	10.0
Tutors	7.5
	<u>24.5</u>

The table below demonstrates that action will be necessary to avoid the service going into deficit in 2009/10 and beyond.

Outdoor Education –estimated surplus/(deficit) @ 2007/08 pay and prices

	<u>2006/07</u>	<u>2007/08</u>	<u>2008/09</u>	<u>2009/10</u>	<u>2010/11</u>	<u>2011/12</u>
	<u>£K</u>	<u>£K</u>	<u>£K</u>	<u>£K</u>	<u>£K</u>	<u>£K</u>
<u>Net Expenditure</u>	<u>886</u>	<u>930</u>	<u>918</u>	<u>918</u>	<u>918</u>	<u>918</u>
<u>Budget</u>	<u>859</u>	<u>778</u>	<u>728</u>	<u>728</u>	<u>728</u>	<u>728</u>
<u>In Year Surplus/(Deficit)</u>	<u>(7)</u>	<u>(152)</u>	<u>(190)</u>	<u>(190)</u>	<u>(190)</u>	<u>(190)</u>
<u>Opening Surplus/(-Deficit)</u>	<u>394</u>	<u>387</u>	<u>235</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>-(145)</u>	<u>(335)</u>
<u>Closing Surplus/(-Deficit)</u>	<u>387</u>	<u>235</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>(145)</u>	<u>(335)</u>	<u>(525)</u>

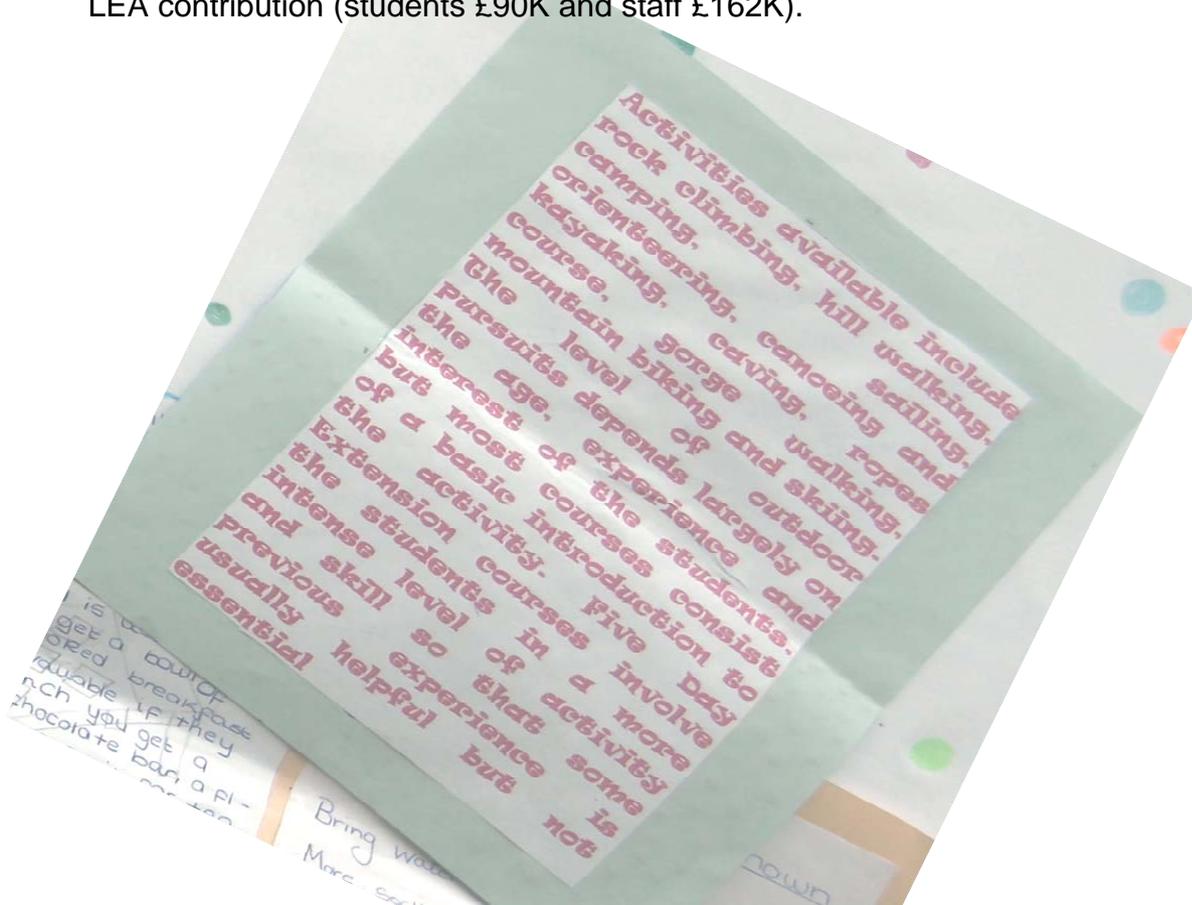
Fee Levels

The charges (from September 2007) are:

	Per day	Per week
	£	£
NYCC pupils/schools	39.50	199.30
Out of County/non-school use	44.47	222.36

External users are charged higher rates because, by law, NYCC cannot charge the cost of tuition to parents of North Yorkshire pupils although they can to pupils from other authorities. However, as the Centres' main purpose is to provide a teacher-led service for North Yorkshire pupils, the lower fee rates apply for most bookings.

Free places are provided to pupils whose parents receive free school meals and to school staff supervising their children during a visit. This accounts for £252K of the LEA contribution (students £90K and staff £162K).



## Visits and Consultations

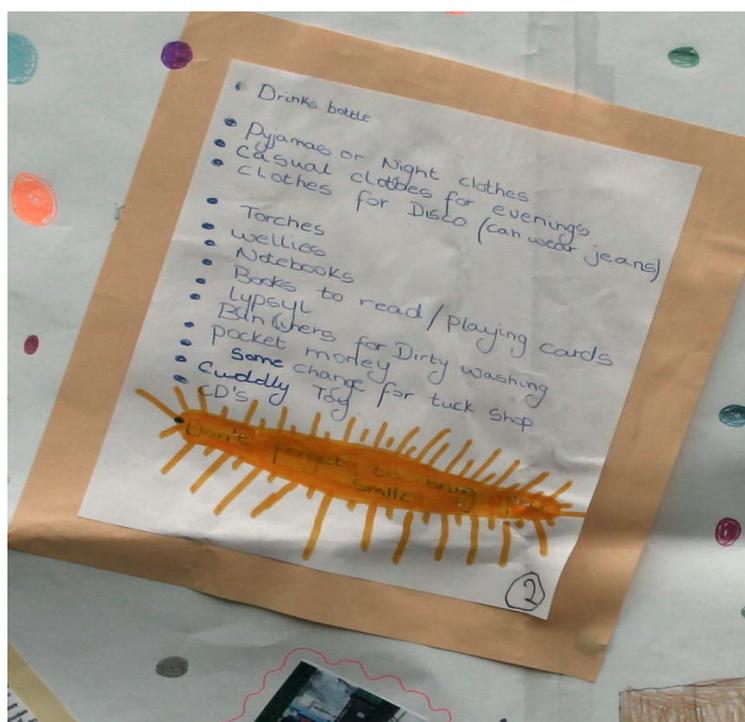
Visits to all North Yorkshire Outdoor Education Centres were undertaken by Members of the Task Group, together with visits to a private sector Outdoor Activity Centre in Lancashire run by NST and a voluntary sector provider, Carlton Lodge, in Thirsk.

This gave task group members direct experience of how each of the Centres operated and provided useful comparative information on the residential accommodation, staffing arrangements and booking and administration processes. It also provided the Task Group with a greater understanding of the differences between an Outdoor Education Centre and an Outdoor Activity Centre.

During the visit to Bewerley Park, on a snowy day, members of the Task Group watched as school children on a residential visit used and enjoyed the natural surroundings. Helped by the Centre Teachers and Tutors, and working with the accompanying Teachers it was easy to see how they combined incidental learning with enjoyable, energetic activities.

Both the private and voluntary sector providers are well known to North Yorkshire schools. Young people going on visits to these centres have a different outdoor experience, with very little incidental learning and use of the natural environment. In some ways, the centres could be located in an urban park rather than in the countryside as there is no engagement with the surrounding countryside. Participants normally remain clean and dry throughout.

The detailed findings from the visits are set out in the following table under specific groupings e.g. Residential Accommodation, Staffing, Marketing etc. Where possible, additional information has been included, together with, observations and potential areas for opportunity or development.



**YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**SCRUTINY REVIEW FINDINGS – OUTDOOR EDUCATION SERVICE**

<b>NY OUTDOOR EDUCATION SERVICE:</b>	<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>ADDITIONAL INFORMATION</b>	<b>OBSERVATIONS</b>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES /DEVELOPMENTS</b>
<p>There are four Outdoor Education Centres:</p> <p>Bewerley Park (Pateley Bridge)</p> <p>East Barnby (Whitby)</p> <p>Great Fryupdale (Danby)</p> <p>Humphrey Head (Grange over Sands, Cumbria)</p>	<p>Centres are strategically placed at either side of the County with one Centre in Cumbria.</p> <p>All centres offer a range of activities that are enhanced by the natural surrounding environment and add to the outdoor education experience.</p> <p>All OE Centres can offer specialised courses that support the needs of gifted and talented young people in specific pursuits and adult courses for people with advanced skills.</p> <p>In Cumbria, the rugged mountain environment whilst still appealing to schools,</p>	<p>Two Centres' are owned by the County Council – Bewerley park and Great Fryupdale</p> <p>Two Centres' are leased – East Barnby and Humphrey Head</p> <p>The whole experience of a week at an NYOES centre aims to be educational with clear educational aims for the week and each session with regular reviews of learning.</p> <p>Not all NY Schools use the NY OE Service, some choose to go elsewhere either within North Yorkshire or out of County.</p>	<p>The greatest proportion of a residential visit is spent away from the OE Centre on teaching sessions in the natural surrounding environment. This being the case there could be potential capacity to create Day Activities for non residential work</p> <p>Packed lunches are prepared by the Kitchens and taken away by the children/teachers</p> <p>Good use is made of incidental learning in the natural environment and from interaction with groups. However, there are still further opportunities to be captured from providing</p>	<p>Consider developing Day Activities sessions for non residential work.</p> <p>Consider developing the potential for advanced programmes for gifted and talent students and with National Clubs and Associations.</p> <p>Expand opportunities for motivational learning courses for older Secondary Students.</p> <p>Service is slightly fragmented and work needs to continue to works towards a fully integrated service.</p> <p>Consider expanding the core offer to include fieldwork sessions on contemporary</p>

	<p>has the potential to offer advanced programmes in specific pursuits</p> <p>Centres are working more collaboratively with better integration as a service.</p> <p>Youth Service has worked with the OES to set up OP4U projects</p>	<p>Young People have opportunity to develop specific skills and experience and attain National Governing Body awards.</p>	<p>further learning in and around the Centres and sites such as wildlife gardens/ quiet reflective seating areas. A good example of this would be Foxglove Covert Nature Reserve in Catterick.</p>	<p>issues such as climate change</p> <p>Develop better links with partners such as NPs, ANOBs and Countryside Services to look at working with them on these topics.</p> <p>Service needs to build on the OP4U model with the Youth Service</p>
Staffing	<p>Commitment and professionalism of all centre staff is extremely good.</p> <p>All Centre Teachers and Tutors are paid in accordance with Schoolteachers Pay and Conditions (195 days pa).</p> <p>Additional payments at unqualified teacher rates are made to teaching staff working above this or are offered time off in lieu and replaced by supply tutor.</p>	<p>Centre teachers and Tutors are mature experienced outdoor educationalists with a good understanding of high quality outdoor education and the ability to make each child's experience have real depth.</p> <p>Voluntary Instructors work with Centre Teachers/Tutors as competent second.</p>	<p>Establishment of leadership/teaching and Tutor posts does appear to be disproportionate and staff contracts are restrictive.</p> <p>Because of the current pay structure this is not comparable with private providers.</p> <p>Good use is made of Voluntary Instructors.</p>	<p>Consideration needs to be given to the skill mix of Centre Teachers/Tutors to meet the changing requirements of the service</p>

<p>Marketing</p>	<p>Marketing of the Service is limited and has relied upon word of mouth from Schools visiting year on year.</p> <p>There is a website which provides necessary information</p>	<p>Improvements could be made to both internal and external marketing of the Service.</p> <p>Directorates tend to use private Hotel/Conference facilities for Team Training Days.</p> <p>External use of the centres is limited although one Centre has at least one Corporate Client who uses the facilities for training purposes.</p>	<p>Better links with the Learning and Development Unit could result in NYCC/Directorates using OEC's for Member/Staff Training Days but the conference facilities would need upgrading.</p> <p>Interestingly a Children's Home in Scarborough thought that OEC only took young children.</p>	<p>The image and perception of service provided by NY OE Service needs refreshing and updating.</p> <p>Website requires updating with improved links to relevant sites such as North Yorkshire Sport.</p> <p>Use of OEC for Member/Staff training days</p> <p>Offer Taster Sessions for Schools not currently using NYOE Service</p> <p>Open Days for the local and wider communities to use facilities and learn about the natural environment.</p> <p>Summer Holiday Activity Day Camps to include learning on contemporary issues such as climate change.</p> <p>Marketing of the facilities to other public sector bodies such as the Fire Service, the Police, the NHS could result in out of term time bookings.</p>
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				Improved links with Clubs and Associations for outdoor events/courses
Residential Accommodation	<p>The Centres' maximum capacity for residential accommodation is 58,305 bed days during the curricular year. This is provided within dormitories and bedrooms.</p> <p>Structure of dormitories and booking requirements (ie school numbers, sex of pupils, group sizes) reduces capacity to approximately 47,100 (80.8% of the total available)</p> <p>Upgrading in the centres have improved facilities for some of the dormitories but there is still more work to be done.</p>	Smaller dormitories enable better more flexible use to be made of the accommodation and assist with meeting the requirements of schools on pupil numbers, sex of pupils, special needs etc.	<p>Upgrading and reducing dormitories sizes with improved washroom/shower rooms facilities has partially taken place in each of the Centres', funding and building structures permitting.</p> <p>There is accommodation for young people with disabilities.</p> <p>Residential accommodation for the Corporate Client is not of an acceptable standard. There is however, the potential to deliver this through links with local hotels/guest houses, whilst retaining the use of the OEC for training/conferences sessions</p>	<p>Upgrades are by no means complete and a decision in relation to the use of the Wrea Head Trust monies would seem urgent.</p> <p>Continue to move towards smaller dormitories with private facilities to improve and upgrade accommodation and facilities.</p> <p>Service would benefit from seeking expert advice on how to expand on their disabled access facilities.</p> <p>Discussions/negotiations regarding accommodation with local Hotels/Guest Houses could be undertaken to expand on potential Corporate Client business</p>
Catering	Catering facilities at each Centre were exceptionally good with quality home cooked and healthy option meals available.	Meals times are very much a part of the whole OE learning experience		

<p>Bookings</p>	<p>Booking arrangements are managed by admin staff in the centres who have built up good relationships with visiting Schools over the years.</p> <p>Cost for five days = £180 approximately</p> <p>Service is introducing a 10% of full cost booking fee for all places booked which will be payable at six months prior to start of booking. Balance will be requested by invoice at least three weeks prior to visit.</p> <p>Cancellations made on bookings more than 6 months before a visit = 10% of total cost  Between 6 &amp; 4 months = 25%  Between 4 &amp; 2 months = 75%  2 months and less = full fees payable.</p> <p>Resio/Reztec is the booking software used by the centres</p>	<p>Last year the service progressed towards a service wide system for booking terms and conditions.</p> <p>Charges for cancellations are at the discretion of the Centre Manager.</p> <p>Information and letter headings are identifiable by centre logos'</p> <p>Not all letters display NYCC logo.</p> <p>Not all Booking forms are set up in a standardised format.</p>	<p>Confirmed bookings by schools are not accompanied by deposits.</p> <p>Centres manage bookings, invoicing and cancellations whilst maintaining a good relationship with visiting schools.</p> <p>The centres do not seem to promote or market their links to NY County Council and that each centre is part of the NY Outdoor Education Service.</p> <p>Whilst it is appreciated that local identity is important the centres market themselves as an integrated service that is part of NYCC</p> <p>Better integration with standardised approaches for booking and admin processes would be a move in the right direction.</p> <p>Usefulness of the Resio/Reztec system is questionable</p>	<p>Development of standardised robust booking arrangements and guidance should be considered for the future.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to developing a booking and administration system that is managed centrally.</p> <p>Cost per day for a residential visit would appear to be quite a bit lower than private and voluntary sector prices and it is suggested that a review of costs is undertaken.</p>
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<b>PRIVATE SECTOR VISIT – WINMARLEIGH HALL, LANCASHIRE</b>				
	<b>Provision</b>	<b>Additional Information</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Observations</b>
<p><b>Winmarleigh Hall Outdoor Activity</b> centre run by the NST Group</p> <p>The Hall was built around the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and is set in approximately 56 acres, although only 18 acres are used by the Hall</p>	<p>The Hall takes a total of 280 guests aged 8 - 13</p> <p>All activities are undertaken on site.</p> <p>A hard hat is the only piece of equipment provided. No other waterproof clothing is provided.</p>	<p>Accommodation is within the Hall itself and in a purpose built extension.</p> <p>Children arrive by coach and because all activities are on site children remain on site throughout their visit.</p> <p>Teachers are not required to accompany the children on their activities</p>	<p>Caters for ages 8 – 13 years only</p> <p>Other than in house training the Hall concentrates on its core business.</p>	<p>Winmarleigh Hall did not claim to have educational aims within the overall residential adventure experience. 'Education' was offered in specialised ICT packages and was based on the availability of IT equipment and some imaginative ICT exercises and activities.</p> <p>There is no incidental learning within the surrounding countryside.</p> <p>This site is used by North Yorkshire Primary Schools.</p>
Marketing	<p>Marketing is undertaken by the NST Group whose core business is European School Trips.</p> <p>WH is the only outdoor activity centre in UK.</p>	<p>All Bookings and administration are undertaken centrally. There is no contact made with the School until near the time of visit unless there are specific requirements.</p>	<p>Centralised processes that dealt with enquiries, sending out of information and the money side of the business.</p>	<p>All users are required to sign up to the booking and cancellations charges.</p>

<p>Residential Accommodation</p>	<p>Rooms are mainly set up as four/six beds – all have en-suite facilities.</p> <p>Teachers accommodation is either Twin or single with en-suite facilities.</p>	<p>Furniture is minimal with no wardrobes or cupboards provided – just a hanging rail.</p> <p>Teachers accommodation has tea/coffee making facilities but no wardrobes or cupboards, just a hanging rail</p>	<p>Layout of the accommodation means that Schools can be allocated a whole corridor for their exclusive use.</p> <p>All dormitories and staff accommodation have en-suite facilities</p>	<p>Apart from the cleaning of the en suite facilities, it is the responsibility of the Teacher to ensure the beds/rooms are kept reasonably tidy.</p>
<p>Staffing</p>	<p>Permanent Staff – Centre Manager, Education Development Mgr, Education Mgr, ICT Staff, 2 Catering Staff.</p> <p>Activity Centre Leaders (age range 18-24) are recruited as seasonal staff, on a 42 hours per week basis with live-in accommodation and paid a basic wage.</p> <p>Staff Training is undertaken at the beginning of the year and whenever a new member of staff joins.</p>	<p>Staff accommodation is adequate/good.</p>	<p>WH runs as a profitable business and required to meet 80% occupancy to remain in profit.</p> <p>The staff work to weekly rotas spread across a four week period.</p>	

<p><b>Booking Rules</b></p>	<p>Pricing structure is strict and variable depending on booking time - high season £250.00 for five days/four nights.</p> <p>A provisional booking on a course is held for approximately 3 weeks.</p> <p>Initial deposit of £30.00 per paying person is required to secure the booking.</p> <p>If the course cost is over £90.00 pp a further interim deposit is required 8 weeks later.</p> <p>The final payment for the trip is due 10 weeks prior to departure.</p> <p>Any cancellations within 10 weeks of departure are subject to cancellation charges.</p>	<p><b>Cancellation Charges:</b></p> <p>More than 70 days loss of Deposit</p> <p>70 - 29 days 60% of costs  28 - 15 days 80% of costs  14 days or less 100% of cost</p>		
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**VISIT TO VOLUNTARY SECTOR PROVIDER CARLTON LODGE ACTIVITY CENTRE, THIRSK**

	Provision	Additional Information	Strengths	Opportunities
Carlton Lodge Registered Charity and a Members of the Youth Clubs Association	<p>Set in secluded 12 acres of woodlands, with lakes, climbing frames etc.</p> <p>Residential Accommodation is for 85 occupants in total.</p> <p>There is a well equipped Sports Hall with climbing wall which is booked at the time of residential visit.</p> <p>New build toilet block has recently been completed.</p> <p>Vision is for further new builds to replace existing basic bunk house and another out buildings – funds permitting.</p> <p>Activities are mainly on site. Recently requests for off site visits have become less frequent.</p>	<p>Used by NY schools but core business is more around 14-19 year and youth improvement programmes.</p> <p>As part of an efficiency saving decision taken to get rid of vehicles and to hire as and when needed.</p> <p>Keen to stress they are not an outdoor education centre.</p>	<p>Used frequently by the 4Youth Service.</p> <p>Contacts with the Youth Offending Team</p> <p>Used by North Yorkshire Schools</p>	<p>Looking to provide training to develop youth development workers who can go out into the community to assist in establishing clubs/activities in areas of need.</p>
Accommodation	There are three blocks for accommodation:	Dormitories are set up as 12/14 bunks to a room.	Found that it was better not to provide wardrobes or cupboards.	

	<p>Main Hall either catering or self catering The Stable Block – either self catering or catering Bunk House – self catering</p>	<p>Showers etc were close by. Teachers accommodation was in twin rooms with separate bathroom facilities</p>	<p>Teachers have a wardrobe</p>	
Staffing	<p>Chief Executive and Director of Operations Staff are employed as Activity Centre Leaders with appropriate qualifications</p>	<p>Accountability is to Board of Trustees</p>		
Booking	<p>Provision booking is held for up to 7 days. Confirmation requires a £50 deposit.</p> <p>Cost per five day residential visit is £230.00</p> <p>Payment is due 8 weeks before the start of the visit. Cancellation more than 8 weeks before - booking fee is forfeited to cover administration costs.</p> <p>8 to 4 weeks before the start date – 50% of the total visit price.</p> <p>4 to 2 weeks before the start date – 75% of the total visit</p>	<p>Carlton Lodge considers it has stringent booking conditions.</p> <p>Significant changes to bookings after the final payment date are charged at £20 for each change made.</p> <p>If a change reduces the size of the group or the length of its stay and it is made within 8 weeks of the start of the visit, this is treated as a cancellation in the number of people or reduction in the length of time and the appropriate cancellation charge is made.</p>		

	price 2 or less weeks before the start date are charged at full cost.			
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## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:**

### **The Task Groups visit to the private and voluntary sector providers are summarised as follows:-**

1. The private sector provision is based around on site outdoor activity with little or no educational content.
2. The cost per residential stay during the high season is more expensive than the County Council service and in the low season they work flexibly to accommodate individual schools for two or three day bookings.
3. The booking rules are strictly adhered to and cancellation fees are collected by the parent group or voluntary sector. Schools are required to sign a contract.
4. All administration, marketing and booking processes are undertaken centrally by the parent group.
5. Staffing and pay structures are very different and employment contracts are in the main seasonal, based on a 40 hours week, live-in contract. It is not possible therefore to make comparisons with the OE Service.
6. Again, the voluntary sector offers outdoor activity which is mainly on site but if a booking requests a visit off site this can be organised.
7. Staffing structures and pay are again not comparable with the OE Service

### **Observations and suggestions following visits and consultations by the Task Group with staff at the North Yorkshire Outdoor Education Centres:**

1. The OE Service has committed and professional staff working in all its Centres but there is a concern that the current skill mix and staffing structures are disproportionate and need reviewing.
2. The Service is moving towards a more integrated approach but there is still more work to be done on booking and office administration processes..
3. Whilst NYEOS has a booking system, in practice, each centre has developed its own methodology which has led to a non standard but flexible approach that, for example, permits schools to change their booking at a late date which may result in a consequential loss of fees to the centre.
4. There is potential for the administration, booking and invoicing functions to become centralised. This would not prevent centres from liaising directly with Schools but would detach them from such administrative tasks as collecting cancellation payments.

5. The existing level of usage does not currently cover costs however the Team thought there was capacity to increase use by a variety of methods but that to do so they thought there was a need to broaden the user base and to consider making additions to the set of courses on offer. It is notable that only one or two schools use the Service for older age pupils, most consider the Service to be for younger pupils; those that do find that the Service contributes to their aim of developing the potential in every child.

6. Capacity - The Team thought that the accommodation was not always used as fully as possible, partly because of a lack of flexibility in the accommodation available but also due to booking difficulties. It was also thought that weekends, holiday periods and day time use of centres (empty as activities take place off site) could be better utilised. At present the Service seems to be thought of as a peripheral Education Service rather than corporately as an asset that could be used, for example, for staff and Member training days. Other suggestions for further use of the centres might be Summer Holiday Activity Day Camps for instance for specialist groups of young people such as LACs or young carers, (*key activity in the Children & Young Peoples Plan: Objective 3.1 to provide a greater range of informal learning opportunities through out of school, residential, holiday and weekend provision*). Taster Sessions could be offered for Schools not currently using the service and Open Days for the local and wider communities.

7. Further links with the 4Youth Service to expand on the OP4U project would be in line with the Youth Plan Objective 1.1.C. (*increased involvement with the Outdoor Education Service through the development of 'extreme' sports*).

8. Curriculum - Currently the Service focuses on physical activities. It may be that a menu of options including Field Studies could be developed to address contemporary issues such as climate change and cultural studies. Partnering arrangements with other NYCC services and other organisations including National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, World Heritage Site Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal, Countryside Services, Learning Through Landscapes, local specialist community groups, local history museums (eg community heritage groups, wildlife conservation groups) could help deliver on these topics. On the physical activity side, close working with School Sports Partnership, North Yorkshire Sport, YOT and out of county groups could be of benefit to the OE Service.

9. Additional facilities at the Centres might include the creation of wildlife gardens to study biodiversity and small scale renewable energy projects which would back up off site study of these topics. Quiet areas outdoors could be set aside for small group work or just for 'time out'.

10. As yet, the urgent upgrading of residential accommodation at all the centres has not been completed nor has there been a decision regarding the use of the Wrea Head Trust monies. It is expected that his Review will contribute to that decision making process by helping the Service to determine its future direction.

11. Encouraging the Corporate Client is more challenging, but there is the potential to develop partnership working with Hotels/Guest Houses in and around the Centres for accommodation only packages.

Note: It is recognised that many of the suggestions would have major staffing, financial and other implications.

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## CONCLUSIONS

The outdoor education provision available to children and young people in North Yorkshire is of high quality and is something to be proud of and valued. The Centres are strategically placed within the County except for one centre which is located on the Cumbrian coast. This centre is conveniently accessed from the West of the County and by using the Lake District Fells for many of its activities it can offer a progressive step in provision especially suited to older young people. A major strength of the other centres is its location each having easy access to much of the County's spectacular upland areas within which many of the activities take place. There is the potential to develop better links with National Clubs and Associations for intermediate and advanced courses for both young people and adults; some of which is reliant on better or at least improved accommodation.

The core offer could be expanded to include fieldwork options covering important contemporary topics. There may be opportunity to work with partner organisations such as NPs ANOBs, Countryside Services etc to help deliver this agenda.

Since commencing this Review the cost of a residential visit has increased in line with inflation and the Task Group supports this increase. However, in order for the Outdoor Education Service to reduce its year on year deficit further action needs to be taken to increase both efficiency and the income it receives. The following recommendations are suggested as areas where opportunities and developments exist.

### RECOMENDATIONS:

1	A more centralised and standardised approach for office, of the administration, booking and invoicing processes should be given due consideration.
2	Adoption of an inclusive approach to encompass children of all ages and from minority groups.
3	Adoption of strategies that make as full a use of the accommodation as possible including weekends, out of term time and during the day when the residential courses are out on activities.
4	Encourage use of the facilities by other groups, eg for NYCC Member and staff training
5	Undertake a review of the skill mix and staffing structures
6	Development of a marketing strategy to project a proactive image,

	promote the resources available and encourage better links with other agencies, public sector organisations and internally.
7	Consider expanding the core offer to include Fieldwork options that tackle contemporary issues such as climate change and cultural studies
8	Consider enhancing the facilities on site to include such things as biodiversity and wildlife gardens and outside creative seating areas
9	Develop partnerships both internally and with other agencies such as NPs, ANOBs, Countryside Services that could provide supplementary learning on environmental and cultural matters.
10	Complete the upgrade of residential accommodation as soon as possible and make an early decision on the use of the Wrea Head Trust money.

