

## Lockdown changed how we do things, but can't is not in our charity's DNA

Here at Outward Bound we are making plans to ensure we remain for another 80 years to help young people recover from Covid, writes **Martin Davidson**



For 80 years The Outward Bound Trust have taken young people into the wildest places of the UK where they embark on a journey of learning and adventure resulting in life-changing outcomes. Over 5,000 young people in Scotland aged nine-19 come to our Loch Eil centre on residential every year where they develop vital life skills like resilience, communication and self-motivation.

### And then came Covid-19...

Since 21 March 2020 we have not been able to work in our usual way. Lockdowns, travel restrictions and government guidelines for bidding school residentials mean that our traditional charity offering is currently off limits.

But our mission is "to inspire young people to defy their limitations so they become strong, resilient and curious, ready for the challenges of life". A mission that is needed now. More than ever. We had to adapt and formulate a new plan. And as things changed so fast our plans had plans! However our focus was always the same – using our skills to support as many young people in Scotland as possible.

### Can't isn't in our DNA

Here was our catch-22. We couldn't deliver residential courses. We needed to innovate to deliver our mission. There was no guarantee that our innovation would get results but we had to try.

To help young people readjust, reconnect and thrive post-lockdown we came up with two new propositions.

In School Adventures – taking Outward Bound to schools until students can come on residential. Opening our residential centres for activity days in the holidays.

These ideas may sound simple, but as an educational charity we had to secure the funding needed to make it happen.

### We couldn't do it without our donors...

Thankfully our supporters are as passionate about what we do as we are, and wanted to support young people in Scotland now, not wait until the pandemic is over. Rath-

bones is one of our supporters who understood the challenges we were facing and stepped in to help:

"Rathbones is proud to continue our support of the fantastic work carried out by The Outward Bound Trust. The mental health impact of the pandemic on young people is hugely concerning. We have been encouraged by The Trust's ability to innovate in times of deep uncertainty and to continue offering access to the vital life skills that will be required in an uncertain future. Realising the requirement for financial support during this period we were happy to double our previous years donation."

It didn't stop there, Swagelok Scotland, Mowi Scotland and Northwood Charitable Trust have all been generous in their support and their funding has already made a positive difference to young people's lives in Scotland. Take a look at our 2020 Social Impact Report: [outwardbound.org.uk/evaluation-covid](http://outwardbound.org.uk/evaluation-covid).

### Leading with conviction

Covid has shaken up our whole society. As we come through this it is important our donors trust Outward Bound. They understand that young people are at the centre of everything we do, and they enter a relationship with us as partners who care about the wellbeing of young people in Scotland, not just funders.

Non-NHS charities have taken a huge hit these past 12 months. The Charities Aid Foundation reported that at the height of the pandemic donations for young people dropped by nine per cent. Yet it is with increasing evidence we see the devastating impact Covid-19 has had on their lives. Here at Outward Bound we are making plans to ensure we remain for another 80 years to help them recover.

If you've read this far and are keen to find out more or are interested in becoming a supporter, please visit [outwardbound.org.uk/scotland](http://outwardbound.org.uk/scotland) or email me directly at [m.davidson@outwardbound.org.uk](mailto:m.davidson@outwardbound.org.uk).

**Martin Davidson, director of Scotland and Innovation at The Outward Bound Trust.**

# We'll not go back to the 'old' normal

Has working from home during lockdown made my team less productive? The answer is no, says **Lesley MacLeod**



Do you remember the joy – when you were little – of bagging the front seat on the top deck of the bus? Let me tell you, even all grown-up and after so long working from home, that euphoria is still there.

I ventured out the other day to get a bit of exercise. I'd become a bit jaded with my usual route so, for a bit of a change, I took the bus slightly further afield, so I had something new to see on my walk home.

As I headed across town, I got a brand-new perspective on life in lockdown and the likely return to work.

I had a bird's eye view of open supermarkets and pharmacies, orderly lines outside bakeries and greengrocers and patient, distanced queues at coffee shops.

But I could also see the boarded-up businesses: the pubs and restaurants; the dressmakers and florists; the specialists and high street traders. Every cinema and theatre. Even our places of worship. And I thought about what the prime minister said about us all rushing back to our offices when the brakes come off.

I'm going to stick my neck out, but I don't think we will. I am not convinced the new normal will be as close to the old as Boris Johnson believes. I'm not saying there won't be people who give up the kitchen for the canteen but, when I've asked my wonderful colleagues at the Association for Project Safety (APS), that's not what they said they wanted.

Yes – they miss the companionship and the social support. Yes – getting out of the house can

have a positive effect on mental health.

Yes – it can sometimes make work easier just to shout over to someone for a different opinion, a quick fix or a sanity check.

But working from home has benefits too. People can work at their own pace. They can be more flexible, balancing family and career. They don't have to commute, leaving more of the day for things they might actually enjoy.

As an employer do I need people on the premises? Has working from home made us less productive? Have people needed to be constantly in view, and shackled to the old routine, to get them to work? Not a bit of it.

I don't need to hover over people to get them to work. They respond much better to trust. Each and every member of our team has stepped up, worked better and turned out more – and higher quality – work. And I can Zoom rather than shuttling up and down to London for meetings.

But what of our members – construction professionals around the country? They have had more for their money.

Since, a year ago, the pandemic forced us home we have put on more webinars and online meetings. Over the last 12 months more than 15,000 people have attended our membership events. When we were reliant on face-to-face meetings, we could only manage a fraction of that.

I don't need to eyeball someone, standing toe-to-toe to close a deal. That's, frankly, more macho than I feel necessary.



Online life has, in a way, opened competition up to those of us who don't actually do business in old boys' clubs. I don't need a private office full of marker pens to be a manager.

But that won't work for everyone. What was sadly clear from my elevated journey was not just the tragedy of the shuttered shops but how little of what lies behind I've actually required – or missed. The long

Covid of our cities may be that, after a year, we don't need all those closed doors to open again.

But I'm lucky and don't have to face that future. For APS tomorrow is blended. We'll have the office – just not all the time. And un-lock may just signal the end of the 34 bus for me.

**Lesley MacLeod, Chief Executive, Association for Project Safety**

People can work at their own pace at home, and no commute leaves more of the day for things they might actually enjoy



future possible persons, are considered to be absolutely equal in value and worth, meaning that they are all equally desirable, then there are no grounds for de-selective abortions, if no extenuating circumstances exist.

Moreover, the current abortion legislation may give a real negative message to persons with a condition, such as a disability, who already exist – the message that it would have been preferable had they not been born. For example, Ms Crowter indicated that the current law is unfair while making her feel like she should not exist. And just stating that she is misguided or mistaken about the negative message she receives about herself in this way is simply unacceptable. The distress is very real. About 90 per cent of foetuses diagnosed with Down syndrome are terminated in the UK.

If the two women lose their legal case, and it became acceptable in law to believe that people, such as Ms Crowter, should not be born, nor be offended by the message they receive from such a statement, this would have significant ethical consequences in society. Interestingly, Ms. Crowter could then legitimately respond by indicating that the judges in the High Court, who seemingly were born with an inability to understand her argument, should also not have existed nor be offend-

ed with the message they receive from such a statement. In fact, it would be possible for anyone in society to openly indicate that any other individual, for whatever inborn reason, should not have been brought into existence. Such an outcome, however, would seriously undermine the very fabric of civilised society.

**Dr Calum MacKellar, Director of Research, Scottish Council on Human Bioethics**



## What could 'better' look like in an impact economy?

Think business for purpose, rather than business purely for profit, to deliver meaningful outcomes for communities in Scotland and beyond, write **Barbara Kidd** and **Dr Wendy Wu**

Does impact investment offer an opportunity to 'bounce back better'? It's already a clichéd phrase, but as thoughts turn (at last) to economic recovery, what will 'better' really mean?

Holyrood and Westminster agree that green innovation will be central to future investment priorities. While undoubtedly better than the economic priorities of old, this can't be all that forms the full picture of a well-being economy.

When Scotland entered its first lockdown, on 24 March 2020, thousands of events were immediately cancelled: among them, an Impact Investment Symposium at Edinburgh Napier Business School.

Impact investment is no 'nice-to-have' extension of mainstream investment. It may have a variety of definitions, but all recognise the central need to promote investment that generates social and environmental impact as well as financial returns.

Think business for purpose, rather than business purely for profit.

Edinburgh Napier had planned its Symposium as a natural extension of a programme of research on Scotland's institutional impact investors, launched in 2012. But impact investment is now a movement whose time has come, as Andre Hoffmann acknowledged when speaking at this year's World Economic Forum at Davos: "In a business context, balance sheets must account for the social, human and natural capital, alongside cash."

Indeed, growing evidence suggests that once they get the focus on their purpose right, financial rewards accelerate for many companies.

So, with 60-plus leading philanthropists, investors, social entrepreneurs, academics and other change-makers engaged, the Impact Investment Symposium moved online in April 2020. The value of the discussions became immediately apparent. The Symposium led on to a monthly meeting, which provides an ongoing opportunity for discussions under 'Chatham House' rules.

The Symposium is also determined to be more than a safe space for debate. It aims to close gaps and break down barriers to access for social enterprises, and five action groups are exploring solutions to:

- target help for social enterprises affected by Covid-19
- evolve effective funding models
- scale sustainably
- improve cross-sector collaboration and innovation
- share learning.

Social Investment Scotland has been involved from the outset. In its 20-year history, SIS has invested almost £100m in more than 450 organisations. In its last full financial year, SIS also launched its own investment fund – SIS Ventures – initially investing in five mission-driven businesses. They include Cyan Forensics Ltd, which has taken research from Edinburgh Napier's School of Computing and now delivers cutting-edge, digital forensic tools for frontline policing.

But as SIS highlights in its most recent annual report – 'Building an Impact Economy' – loans and support for social enterprises have been savaged by the pandemic. The Symposium has helped in direct ways: Nile HQ, a system design consultancy, worked to cascade techniques via the Symposium that help social enterprises address specific operational challenges; and support through the Business School has also helped social enterprises align their objectives with one or more of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

An action group has now submitted a funding proposal to accelerate the development of social impact policy to maximise forestry-related income in Scotland. Another group is exploring the particular needs and aspirations of young people.

An impact economy will be one where social entrepreneurs, businesses, consumers, investors, and government align policy and action, working to deliver meaningful outcomes for communities in Scotland and beyond. The Symposium's passionate members are playing a key role in facilitating that exchange, while responding to some of the immediate challenges we face. It is playing an instrumental role in finding a route to success that will support economic recovery for all our communities.

**Barbara Kidd, Head of Development & Alumni Relations, Edinburgh Napier University and Dr Wendy Wu, Lecturer, Edinburgh Napier Business School.**

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## Abortion legislation covering disability is unethical

The 1967 Act is an outward expression of blatantly discriminatory attitudes, says **Dr Calum MacKellar**

A challenge to existing abortion legislation for disability, which may have consequences for Scotland, has been brought to the High Court of England and Wales by two women, Heidi Crowter who has Down syndrome and Maire Lea-Wilson who has a small son with the same condition. They both believe a clear case of discrimination exists with the updated Abortion Act 1967.

This enables a termination up until birth if the foetus has a disorder even when the procedure is not necessary to prevent grave injury to the pregnant woman, or to save her life, but restricts abortions to 24 weeks if the foetus has no disability. In other words, a non-disabled foetus is better protected in law from being terminated, meaning that it can also be

seen as having more value and worth, than a foetus with a disorder.

The two women argue that the possibility to deselect, through abortions, foetuses with a congenital disability up until birth is an outward expression (a revelation) of a blatant discriminatory and ableist attitude in society. In a way, it would be similar to the situation where a female foetus could be aborted, just because of its sex, in a sexist society. Or even that a black foetus could be aborted, just because of its skin colour, because racist values in a society are not being challenged. Indeed, all such abortions would be incompatible with the absolute equality in value and worth of all human beings which is the very basis of a civilised and inclusive society. In other words, if all persons who actually exist, as well as all

