

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

26 JANUARY 2012

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>OAKLANDS</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>ACTING DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR ANN MCLACHLAN</b>
<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>NO</b>

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report provides an update for Committee on the work of The Oaklands Centre. The Centre provides outdoor education for children, young people and adults. The Oaklands Centre supports the Council's Corporate priorities by providing opportunities for children, young people and adults to learn and develop their skills. The report highlights the success of the centre and future planned developments for the service.

### 2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

2.1 That Committee note the work of The Oaklands Centre and planned future developments.

### 3.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

3.1 This report updates Committee on the picture of outdoor education at The Oaklands Centre and identifies areas for development and potential risks.

### 4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

#### Background

#### 4.1 Vision

The Oaklands Centre, a refurbished country house set in the Snowdonia National Park, has a successful 28 year history of providing high quality Outdoor Education. Its vision is to encourage learning about self, others and the environment through a wide range of adventurous experiences and activities such as: canoeing, climbing, expeditions, gorge walking, mine exploration, sea level traversing and orienteering.

#### 4.2 Accommodation

The Centre has had a significant new build extension (2006, Big Lottery funding, £448000) and a major refurbishment (2009, Local Authority funding over £350000). The dormitory style accommodation, sleeping up to 44, is of a high standard with all en suite rooms, three rooms are fully accessible for people with

disabilities. There are en suite facilities for staff. There is a day visit facility consisting of a changing toilet and shower block. There are rooms for relaxation and meetings, giving a professional yet homely feel. The Centre also accommodates groups locally off site in: hostels, bunk houses and campsites.

#### 4.3 User Groups

The range of our users is wide and includes Primary, Secondary and Special Schools, Further Education Colleges, Princes Trust Volunteers, Duke of Edinburgh, Youth Service, Youth Offending Service, Work Based Learning Providers, Connexions, Teacher's and Youth Workers and third sector Community groups. Courses promote health and education and meet many National Curriculum criteria by providing opportunities for learning outside the classroom. Examples include geography course work, English, Maths, History, Science, Art and PE. In addition opportunities to add value to BTEC National Diploma qualifications, GCSE and A Level modules for PE, Duke of Edinburgh Award Training and Assessment Courses for leaders are all in place and form part of the offer.

The Centre has an excellent reputation of working with vulnerable groups of young people with emotional, physical, behavioural issues, including looked after children, young offenders, excluded pupils and children from low income families. The residential outdoor experience is important in building self esteem, developing self-confidence and an awareness of others. The majority of vulnerable groups are by necessity often small and sole use of the centre is required to maintain relationships and give opportunities for development. The Centre in these circumstances is not running at full capacity, however, is offering a valuable service to the young people of Wirral.

In 2010/11 8300 student days, 6000 bed nights and a total of 2833 students visited the Centre during that period. (Appendix 1 Occupancy Figures).

Feedback from programme leaders and pupils is excellent across all measures. (Appendix 2 Feedback Reports).

#### 4.4 Staffing

The staff at Oaklands are highly qualified and experienced. There are 4.7fte outdoor staff who are teacher or youth worker qualified in addition to a part time administrator, two part time cooks, a site manager, and a cleaner. Additionally, there is a freelance staff panel to call on to deliver courses. With the exception of the Head of Centre and Site Manager, all staff contracts are 43 weeks.

#### 4.5 Financial Background

In previous years the Centre has managed to reduce its expenditure and increase its income and throughput of students. A subsidy in excess of £261,000 in 1993 has been reduced year on year to £55000 in 2011/12. Following the consultation "Wirral's Future Be a Part of It," the Centre was tasked to reduce its reliance on council subsidy to zero by 2015. Strategies and actions to achieve a zero budget by 2015 were agreed by The Oaklands Management Committee in September 2011.

Following the transfer of various funding streams from the Local Authority to schools, including funding for extended services, the removal of Area Based Grant and the creation of the Pupil Premium, the Management Committee took the decision to remove fee remitted provision from September 2011. Wirral schools have had Pupil Premium of £430 rising to £488 per FSM pupil in the current academic year this is set to rise to £600 per FSM pupil in 2012/13.

#### 4.6 Actions and Priorities in 2012

4.6.1 Introduce price increases via a new phased pricing structure. A 6% increase in prices from September 2011 until March 2012 and a further increase of 6.6%, from April 2012 to March 2013. (Appendix 3 Pricing Structure)

4.6.2 Implement a new booking system. Booking requests submitted from January each year for the following calendar year, (i.e. taken in January 2012 for 2013), the aim being to dovetail bookings into available slots and maximise usage.

4.6.2 Maximise the allocation of staff time to programmes. Secure confirmation of group numbers as far in advance as possible so that staff time on programme is maximised. Encourage holidays to be taken in quieter periods

4.6.3 Develop, in conjunction with council marketing team, a marketing plan to attract new business from a wider client group with the aim of increasing occupancy at the centre at weekends and during school holidays.

4.6.4 Forge closer links with Invest Wirral through the Business Forum to engage local businesses in fundraising or corporate team building packages.

4.6.5 Through the Oaklands Management Committee establish a 'Friends of Oaklands' group. The aim of this voluntary group will be to fund raise to support vulnerable groups to access the Oaklands experience. Cammell Laird has donated £2500 to work with young people from their community. In May 2012 two fundraising days have been planned, The Contact Company have already agreed to enter two teams, discussion is ongoing with Tranmere Rovers.

4.6.6 The Centre will look to bid for new business by targeting new national initiatives, e.g. Challenge Summer 2012, broadening the Duke of Edinburgh work, extending split week courses over weekends, and introducing arts / music weekends.

#### 5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

5.1 There is a risk arising from transferring the centre to become fully self-financing and encouraging sufficient use of the centre by schools and other customers.

5.2 To mitigate against this risk the actions outlined in 4.6 above will be implemented.

#### 6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

None.

## **7.0 CONSULTATION**

7.1 Learner feedback is regularly collected and acted upon as part of the quality assurance processes of the centre.

## **8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

8.1 The Oaklands Centre welcomes opportunities to work with a wide range of voluntary, community and faith groups. There are many opportunities for partnership working in different ways, in particular, through 'The Friends of Oaklands' group.

## **9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

9.1 There are no specific implications arising from this report at present.

## **10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no specific implications arising from this report at present.

## **11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

(a) Is an EIA required? No

## **12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 Environmental awareness is encouraged as an underpinning area in programmes at Oaklands.

## **13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 None

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 Occupancy rates  
Appendix 2 Feedback Reports  
Appendix 3 Course Fees

## **REFERENCE MATERIAL**

None

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>

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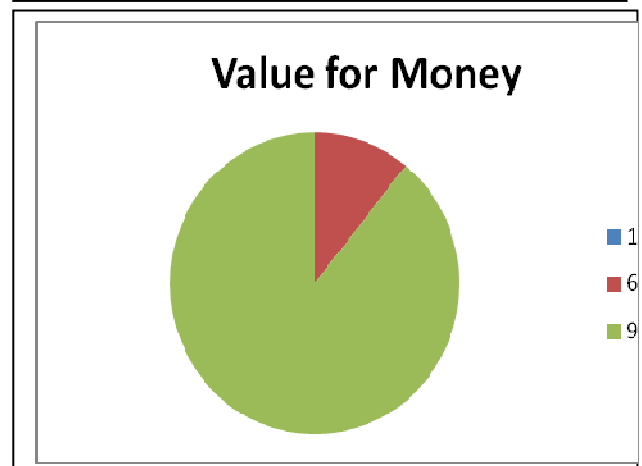
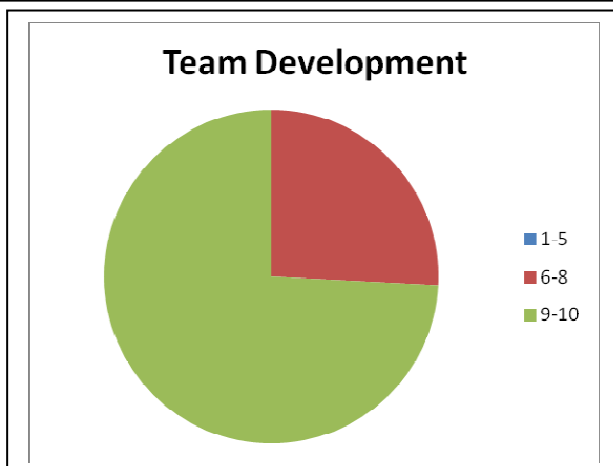
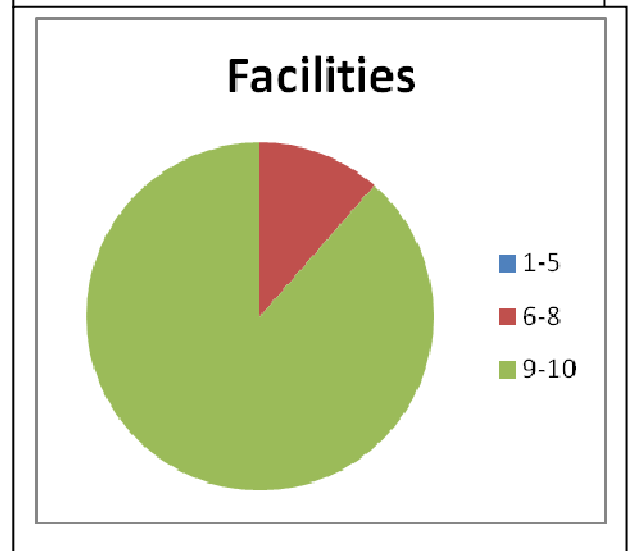
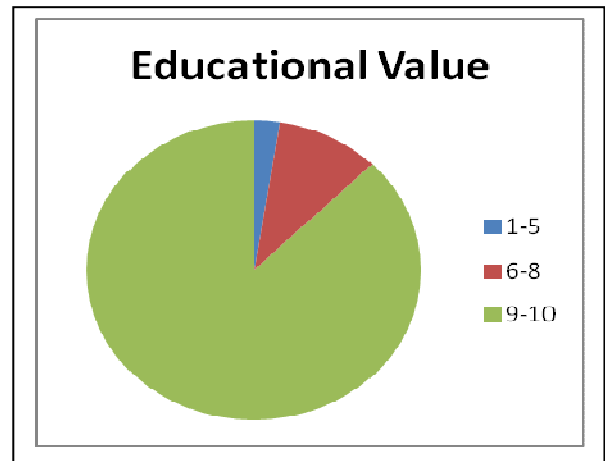
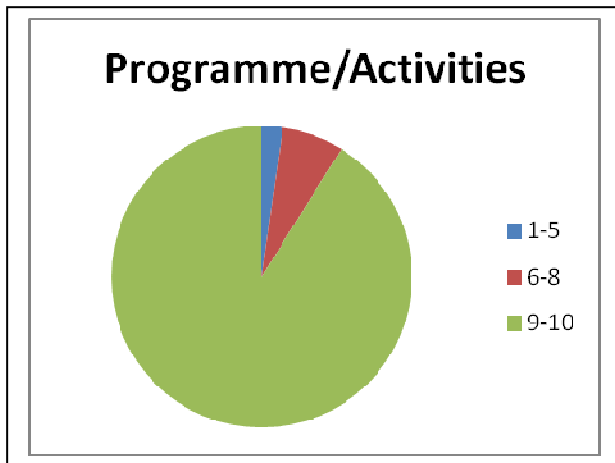
## Appendix 1 Occupancy Rates

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12 to date	2012/13 Bookings already taken	2012 / 13 Targets
<b>Day Visits</b>	34	26	31*	5	34
<b>Weekends</b>	24	27	25*	3	27
<b>Mon – Friday and 7 day courses</b>	22	28	23*	19	22
<b>Split Weeks</b>	44	46	38*	43	43
<b>Total Bookings</b>	124	126	117*	70	126
<b>Bed nights</b>	5405	5998	5730*		
<b>Student Days</b>	7594	8301	8030*		
<b>Course Income</b>	£275 932	£337 269	£300 192*	Actual students nos not known	£339 624
<b>Comments</b>			*Target £320,400 These are predicted to date, 3 months to run	* Expect figures to rise considerably, these are the early school bookings only.	

## Appendix 2 Summary of Feedback Reports

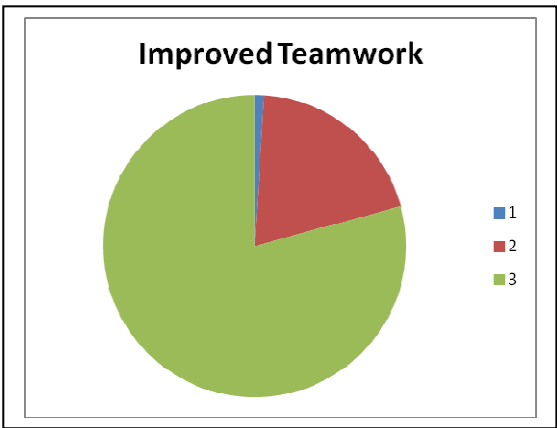
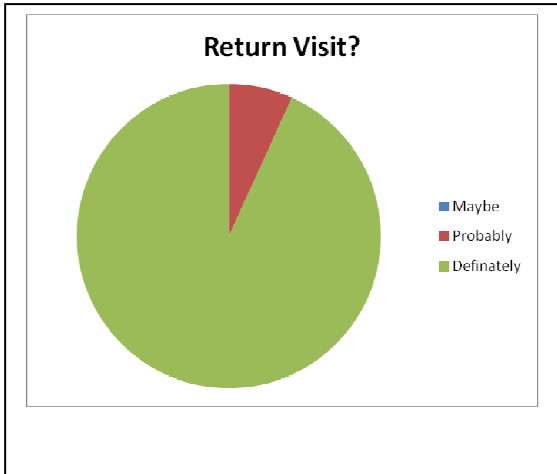
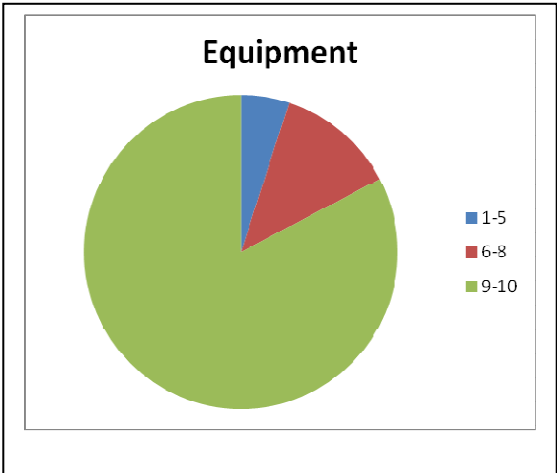
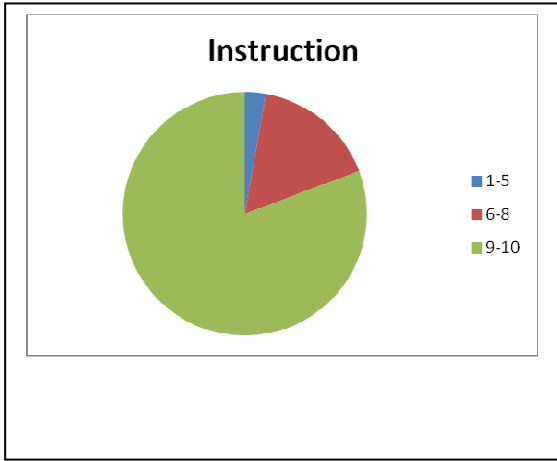
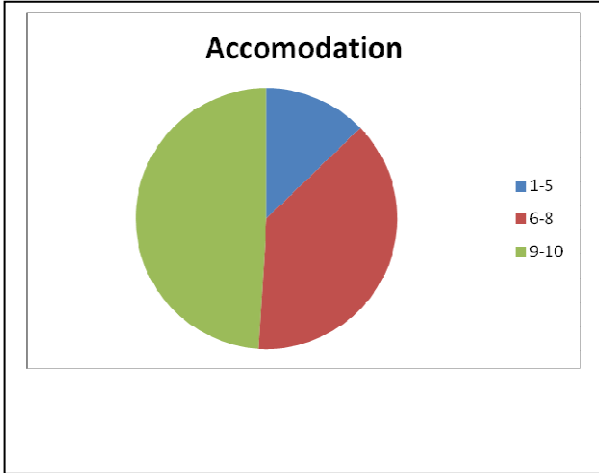
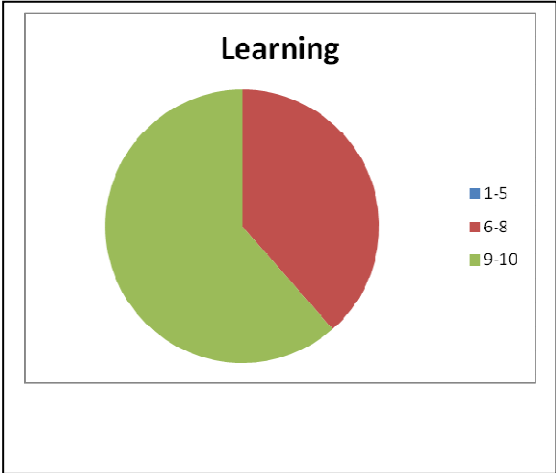
### Leaders Feedback Summary 2011

The following is a pictorial summary of feedback from group leaders coming to Oaklands during 2011. Leaders were asked to rate their experiences from 1 -10 with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest score



# Student Feedback Summary 2011

The following is a pictorial summary of feedback from students coming to Oaklands during 2011. Students were asked to rate their experiences from 1 -10 with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest score.





## **Leader's Feedback Summary 2011**

93% of leaders rated their activity programme very good or excellent

87.5% of leaders rated the educational value of their visit as very good or excellent

97% of leaders rated the staff approach and skills as excellent

87.5% of leaders rated the facilities as very good or excellent

72% of leaders stated that team work skills of their group consistently improved as a result of the Oaklands experience

89% of leaders said that their experience represented excellent value for money

## **Student Feedback Summary 2011**

100% said that they had learnt something from their course that would help them at home or school. The remaining 37.5% said they had probably learnt something that would help them at home or school

65% said the learning was significant

49% said they rated the accommodation as "great" 37.5% said it was "comfortable" and 13.5% rated the accommodation "poor"

85% of students said their instructors made their course challenging and looked after them all the time

89% rated their equipment as excellent

82% of students thought that the course had improved their teamwork

93% said they would definitely come back to the Centre again

## **Appendix 3**

### **Course Fees April 2012 – March 2013**

	<b>5 day Courses</b>	<b>Split Weeks</b>	<b>Weekend Courses</b>
<b>Winter – Nov, Dec, Jan, Feb</b>	<b>£216.00</b>	<b>£121.00</b>	<b>£101.00</b>
<b>Autumn / Spring – Sept, Oct, March</b>	<b>£235.00</b>	<b>£131.00</b>	<b>£112.00</b>
<b>Summer – April, May, June, July, Aug</b>	<b>£245.50</b>	<b>£135.00</b>	<b>£115.50</b>
<b>Day Visits £321.00</b>			