



BRITISH
EXPLORING
SOCIETY

Advance and Ascend

A summary of our strategy
for the next 5 years

Exceptional learning expeditions,
executed brilliantly

Profound, individual experiences
with positive benefits for life

A growing, inclusive community
of remarkable explorers and leaders
– all making a difference

Contents

- 01 In summary
- 02 A reminder or introduction to who we are
- 03 Our strategy 2016-2022
- 07 Our vision – what we believe in
- 08 Our goals
- 09 Thank you



In summary:

Over the next five years we will:

- Create a sustainable year-round programme of expeditions, based on a 10-year cycle, to meet the needs of a diverse range of young people – with demonstrable and lasting individual benefit and social impact
- Plan and deliver increasingly ambitious, one-off expeditions to celebrate key events in the World and engage wider audiences with our work
- Invest in our corporate systems and our staff
- Establish an approach to fundraising to help safeguard our future
- Communicate our organisational values, our work, and the quality of what we do
- Develop an expeditions leadership programme to support our work, and to promote access to expeditionary learning more broadly
- Develop partnerships with other organisations who share our ambitions, from whom we can learn, and who can help us improve, grow and deliver our strategy
- Foster our network of passionate, committed and technically able volunteers and members
- Embed evaluation to underpin our strategy



“ My expedition was the most challenging, exhilarating, fascinating and mind-broadening experience I have ever had. It was all that I hoped for and more – I would do it all again in a heartbeat.”

Young Explorer 2015

A reminder or introduction to who we are

British Exploring Society was founded as a charity in 1932 in a period of severe austerity. 80-odd years later we still create bespoke expeditions to wild and remote overseas locations in order to challenge and positively transform the expectations and future lives of young people.

Our explorers return from expeditions with an enduring love of the outdoors, the mental toughness to succeed in life and the appetite to take control of their lives.

Our unique approach is supported by a remarkable group of high calibre professional volunteers who we support and train and who donate hundreds of professional hours to us every year.

The profile of our explorers includes young people from communities with around double the national average for joblessness and other key indicators of economic deprivation who face multiple personal, emotional and social challenges as well as those with high expectations of personal and professional success who might already intend to progress to University.

Our aim is for our work to be transformational for everyone who participates. We believe, and the evidence we collect confirms, that our intensive investment in young people benefits both the individual *and* society over many years.



Our strategy 2016–2022

When we started considering our plans for the future we first considered our values, our heritage, and what we believe in. This is captured in Our Vision (page 07). We then moved on to agreeing how we were going to bring that vision to life and set ourselves Goals (page 08).

The first five years of our plan are now in place.

The plan retains our total commitment to our founding idea; to provide exciting, challenging, life-changing expeditions in wild and remote overseas locations for young people. We also remain committed to the idea that our work should benefit young people from every area of society.

We believe that society needs adventurous, resilient, independent thinkers and adaptable team players more than ever. The British Exploring experience provides an almost unique opportunity for young people to discover their capabilities at key points in their transition to adulthood.

Our expeditions

We want to be able to provide more opportunities each year for young people to benefit from that experience. In 10 years, we hope to be taking around 1000 young people on overseas expeditions every year. We will be engaging with considerably more through partnership work in the UK. By then we will be running around 18 expeditions at points throughout the year. Our expeditions will be an approximately 50/50 mixture, as now, of 'open' – to which any young person can apply – and 'invited' – arranged in partnership with other organisations to meet the needs of specific groups of young people.

We will be planning our expeditions further ahead – to ensure that our growth plans are manageable, and in order to allow us to create a few landmark 'pinnacle' expeditions too. These will be particularly challenging or unique opportunities to celebrate our heritage or important natural or world events. We are putting in place a 10-year expedition cycle to support this ambition. We might want to revisit an historic long march, catch a total solar eclipse, celebrate an important anniversary or tackle a notably remote location.

British Exploring has participated in science throughout its history and has contributed to numerous published reports and surveys. Our archives contain precious records of field work undertaken by Young Explorers for over 80 years. Our greatest wildernesses have diminished significantly during the lifetime of the charity. Our expeditions often take us to fragile and unique environments and we are working hard to ensure that we always visit responsibly and leave no trace behind us. Ensuring that our Young Explorers complete their experience with us with a profound sense of their connection with the wilderness and the natural world, and of their accountability for its future wellbeing, will be at the centre of our approach to science and wider learning opportunities on our expeditions.

In this as in so many areas of our strategy the development of strong partnerships will be key. We are also creating an education advisory role to ensure that we adopt a clear, coherent approach to the development and delivery of science and wider learning opportunities on our expeditions.



Our participants

We want to be genuinely inclusive. Our plans will ensure that our expeditions provide opportunities for young people from every area of society to participate over time. Our approach doesn't work equally well for everyone. (See page 4 for more about our 'blueprint') so we will be focusing on working with those who are:

- Aged 14 to 25
- Cognitively able to participate in reflection
- Able to be stretched physically
- Able to be on expedition 'independently'

In addition to the young people we have worked happily with for many years, we have identified additional groups of young people we want to work more with, and/or who are currently underrepresented on our expeditions. These include:

- Those at risk of becoming NEET (not in employment, education or training)
- Ethnic minority groups
- Those from communities exhibiting a number of indicators of social and economic deprivation
- Those with physical disabilities fitting our participant profile
- Those in employment/ workplace training

Our people

We are investing in our staff. We have made a number of changes to our leadership and expeditions team structure and are delighted to have recruited to those roles from within our talented team.

We have moved from an intern programme to an apprenticeship scheme and already welcomed our first four apprentices.

We will invest in the commitment and talent of our remarkable voluntary leaders in order to make our growth and our inclusion plans possible. We have created a new role to support the development of leadership. We are also recruiting additional professional volunteers in editorial, fund-raising and educational advisory skills to augment the contribution already made by our dedicated archive and governance volunteers and technical advisors.

We have always been based on professional voluntarism. We will in future declare the value of the professional hours we receive from our volunteers, in the field, and in support of our core team. We received a donation of around £250k of professional volunteer hours in 2016. Year on Year this remarkable contribution will continue to climb, underpinning our model as a charity based on voluntarism.

Our members are also our people. We want to be able to resource properly the staffing, skills and IT we need to communicate with our enthusiastic and capable network of members properly. We would like our members to be able to advocate for our work more effectively, and in turn would like to be able to provide greater opportunities for our members to engage with us and with each other.

Our partners

We will work in partnership with other organisations who share our enthusiasm and commitment to the outdoors, and who believe like us that giving young people the chance to experience challenge and adventure will change their lives forever. We have already publicly declared that partnership ambition with Outward Bound, Brathay Trust and Whole Education. Part of the purpose of working in partnership is to increase the public appetite for expeditionary experiences, and to communicate more effectively the transformational impact that they can have.

The way we work

We have worked hard to understand and articulate exactly what it is that we do. We have created a blueprint for our expeditions which is essential for consistent planning, delivery and evaluation. Our blueprint will help us define our long-term goals, and then map backwards to identify everything we need to do, every time we run an expedition, to secure those goals reliably.

This blueprint will start to show the benefits of our expeditions by demonstrating the direct links between what we do and the positive changes which happen in the short, intermediate, and long-term for our Young Explorers. The blueprint will give consistency to our work and help us improve. It will also help us understand, value and protect what is distinctive about what we do.

We have already made and will continue to make changes to the way we operate. Our commitment will always be to maintaining our values and character - whilst improving on our performance. We've been reviewing and simplifying our structure and improving our systems, in particular to enable partnership working. We are asking others to challenge us and the way we work too. This will be a continuous process from now onwards. We are changing how we talk about our work, how we recruit Young Explorers, how we communicate with new and existing Members.

We are putting in place a British Exploring Specification which brings together our own definition of excellence in standards of delivery alongside all statutory and optional benchmarks and standards to safeguard everyone we work with, and the environments in which we operate. We're reviewing governance in a similar fashion to ensure that we're in good shape to meet our ambitious plans for the future. We want to be exceptional at what we do.





Our funding model

Like many charities, we face a range of financial challenges. In order to ensure that a wide range of Young Explorers continue to participate in our expeditions, we have to change our funding model.

We have launched Explorer Miles, in partnership with VInspired and Step Up to Serve, to support meaningful volunteering and to encourage a wider uptake of our expeditions. You can find out more about Explorer Miles here:

www.britishexploring.org/explore-with-us/explorer-miles.aspx

We remain committed to the principle that meaningful individual fund-raising is an important part of the process of preparation by Young Explorers for expedition, and an expression of personal commitment for the vast majority – but a wide survey of youth development activity undertaken for this strategy demonstrates that we cannot continue to expect our Young Explorers to fund participation on ‘open’ expeditions without support. We will not be able to meet our growth plans without providing a degree of subsidy. We will therefore need to

secure a range of supporters and sponsors in order to progressively discount rates of participation in our expeditions.

In order to help us achieve our fund-raising targets, we are creating a Development Board reporting to our Council.

We will also need to be able to articulate exactly what it is we do, and the benefit it has, effectively. Capturing the evidence of the value of our expeditions is challenging and complex – but essential. Creating an evaluation framework for British Exploring is a key part of our plan for the next five years.

Our home

We are blessed to be tenants at the Royal Geographical Society, and hope that we will always occupy a space in this prestigious Society, with which we have so many links. In order to deliver our strategy, however, we will need to re-locate our main operational activities to be alongside our kit stores, hopefully with some space for some training activities too. We will be seeking a space for occupation and/or conversion over the next 18 months to 2 years.

Our vision – what we believe in

British Exploring will be universally recognised for its exceptional contribution to the development of potential in young people from every area of society through its uniquely challenging expeditions.

Our Young Explorers, staff and leaders will be passionate advocates of social action, and for the welfare of our planet. For our Young Explorers, this advocacy will be reflected in the educational, professional and personal choices they make throughout their lives.

We will inspire our Young Explorers to harness the independence of mind, mental toughness, confidence and social purpose they have fostered with us to make a real, positive difference in society.

Our explorers, staff and inspirational leaders will include those who face multiple challenges or disadvantages, including disability, and will be increasingly culturally diverse.

British Exploring will be well-known and admired for its exceptional competence, and respected for the values and behaviours of its team:

We will always be hard working, and committed to our vision. We will work alongside our explorers, new staff and volunteers with consistent care, compassion, warmth and respect. We will collaborate with enthusiasm, fairly and with great honesty. We will be open-minded, happy to be challenged and exhibit robust good judgement and courage. We will be optimistic, enterprising, energetic and adventurous.

We will protect and reflect our remarkable heritage in everything we do





Our goals

Summit one; to increase our impact: extend our intensive youth development work to benefit 1000 young people a year within the next 10 years

Summit two; to focus our work; increasing our impact with young people with the most limited access to opportunities, who face the greatest challenges in society; increasing the diversity and inclusion of our programmes and recruitment for leaders, staff and explorers using specific and progressively more challenging targets each year

Summit three; to grow the market: increasing awareness and thence access to high quality expeditionary learning for young people in this country through advocacy, partnership, and through providing a high quality training programme for potential future leaders of challenging youth development expeditions

1st Challenge; to develop a sustainable funding and fundraising model and to ensure financial accessibility to our programmes for the young people who will benefit most from our work

2nd Challenge; to develop high quality infrastructure and skills to keep pace with our ambitions for growth, and to safeguard the quality of our model and reputation at all times

3rd Challenge; to change our working practices and staffing structure to enable us to develop meaningful relationships with schools, the education sector and other key partners

4th Challenge; to provide consistent, compelling evidence over time of the value of our work.

Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to read this summary of our strategy.

If you would like to find out more about the impact of our work, please go to;
www.britishexploring.org/our-approach/impact.aspx

If you'd like to see some short videos which explain a little about our work there are two you can find here:
www.britishexploring.org/who-we-are/support-us.aspx

and here:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wxQg6lrJbg

If you would like to get in touch with us, comment on this document, offer us ideas, challenge or support, please get in touch with our CEO directly:

Honor@britishexploring.org

Photo Credits

With thanks to Belinda Dixon, Johnny Fenn, Naomi Holmes, Huw James, Nicky Mount, Azure Prior, James Rigby & Hamish Steptoe for their images.

All other images were taken by our Explorers and Leaders during expedition or training weekends in the UK using British Exploring camera equipment.



“Life changing. I have learnt more about myself than I ever thought I could know, a journey of self-discovery.”

Young Explorer 2015



British Exploring Society

1, Kensington Gore
London
SW7 2AR

tel: 020 7591 3141

email: info@britishexploring.org

web: www.britishexploring.org

twitter: @Brit_exploring

facebook: British Exploring Society

Registered Charity 802196



**BRITISH
EXPLORING
SOCIETY**

