

Campaign for Adventure Agenda

Thursday, 27 February 2014

I. The Campaign for Adventure (CfA) is a national initiative to improve understanding of the important benefits for individuals and for society which stem from an adventurous approach to life in all its aspects. This Campaign arises from a developing awareness in many quarters that the increasing tendency to protect people from danger and the concern to avoid risk, if carried too far, will stifle natural creativity and enterprise. The major impetus for the Campaign came from the Conference "A Question of Balance", held at the Royal Geographical Society on November 29th 2000. HRH Prince Philip, in calling for this campaign, stated "The danger for humanity lies not in taking risks, but in not taking enough risks. Throughout 2014, with many collaborations and lobbies, CfA continues its influence on British society and occasionally further afield.

II. The tradition of adventure in the UK is deeply ingrained. Throughout our history, individuals and groups have extended the scope of human knowledge and capability by venturing beyond the safe boundaries of known terrain into the unexplored regions of the physical, social and intellectual landscape. In doing so, they have gained deep personal insight and reward and also performed an important service to the wider community. By exploring beyond what is known, in any field of activity, people exercise creativity, they expand understanding, they extend human capability, and they identify new visions and new techniques for future advances. This process lies at the heart of human progress in every field. Thus the importance of adventure is both economic and psychological. We know that innovation and risk-taking are fundamental elements of successful enterprise. And we need to experiment with and practice new behaviours in order to be able to adopt them.

III. All adventurous, innovative or exploratory activity entails uncertainty of outcome and possible exposure to hazard, and thus involves some level of risk to those involved. The risks may be physical, psychological, social, and frequently connected with failure in some form. Traditionally, hazards and risks were identified and assessed unsystematically, usually on the basis of increasing individual or collective experience. This common-sense approach was generally effective, but there were occasional failures of judgement or communication and instances of irresponsibility, usually based on ignorance, excessive ambition or over-enthusiasm. There is therefore, nowadays, a generally recognised need to identify hazards and assess risk, particularly physical risk, more systematically, and to hold to account those who fail to do this when carrying responsibility for others.

IV. However, this has led to an increasingly restrictive and even pessimistic approach to life, in which the emphasis on risk is frequently out of proportion, in which every hazard is seen as something to be avoided and risk-taking is regarded as unacceptable. This tendency is compounded by a culture which often attempts to attach blame and to seek compensation for any errors or misjudgements which occur. The result is that courage is sacrificed to caution; and many people are reluctant or fearful to engage in any project involving adventure and uncertainty, which may entail hazard and perceived risk. Perhaps more damagingly, they become unwilling to encourage or even allow others (and particularly children) to engage in adventurous or experimental ventures, often through fear of litigation should any error of judgement be made. There is an alternative danger that, by choosing to stay within the realms of the safe and the familiar, our society may inhibit discovery and enterprise and fail to take advantage of opportunities which can only arise through reaching out into the unknown. There is a real possibility that the necessary culture of safety may degenerate into a damaging and restrictive culture of fear. The purpose of the Campaign for Adventure is to counter this tendency by providing a more accurate understanding of the benefits, as well as the joys, of living life adventurously.