

Education, Children and Young People Committee

Wednesday 13 November 2024
29th Meeting, 2024 (Session 6)

Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill

Introduction

1. Liz Smith MSP introduced the [Schools \(Residential Outdoor Education\) \(Scotland\) Bill](#) on 20 June 2024. The Education, Children and Young People's Committee has been designated as the lead committee for this Members' Bill at Stage 1.
2. The Bill establishes that all pupils in state and grant-aided schools will have the chance to experience at least four nights and five days of residential outdoor education during their school career.
3. This is the second evidence session on the Bill and the Committee will take evidence from the following panels of witnesses—

Panel 1

- Andrew Bradshaw, Wider Achievement Manager (Outdoor Learning and Adventure Education), City of Edinburgh Council and Secretary of the Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education
- Matthew Sweeney, Policy Manager, Children and Young People, COSLA
- Tara Lillis, Policy Official, Scotland NASUWT
- Brenda Leask, Executive Manager, Schools, Shetland Islands Council

Panel 2

- Phil Thomson Development Manager, Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre
- Nick March, National Chair, Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres Scotland
- Freda Fallon, Development Manager Scotland, Outward Bound Trust
- Jamie Miller, Chief Executive, Scottish Outdoor Education Centres

Background

4. SPICe has produced a background briefing on the Bill which is [published on the website](#). SPICe has also produced a briefing paper for this session which is attached at **Annexe A**.

Evidence

Oral evidence

5. At its meeting on 6 November, the Committee took evidence from the following witnesses—
 - Emeritus Professor Chris Loynes, Professor in Human Nature Relations, Institute of Science and Environment, Centre for National Parks and Protected Areas (CNPPA) & Outdoor Studies, University of Cumbria
 - Professor Greg Mannion, Senior Lecturer in Education, University of Stirling, Scotland
 - Dr Roger Scrutton (FRSE, FHEA) Honorary Research Fellow in Outdoor Education, University of Edinburgh
6. Meeting papers and a transcript from that meeting, including written evidence provided by witnesses, are published on the [website](#).

Call for views

7. The Committee issued a call for views on the provisions of the Bill which ran from 3 July until 4 September 2024 and 269 responses were received
8. The [responses to the call for views have now been published](#). A [SPICe summary of the responses](#) received has also been published on the website.

Written evidence

9. The following witnesses have provided written evidence which is attached at **Annexe B**—
 - City of Edinburgh Council
 - COSLA
 - NASUWT
 - Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education
 - Shetland Islands Council
 - Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre
 - Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres Scotland
 - Outward Bound Trust
 - Scottish Outdoor Education Centres

Scottish Government position

10. The Scottish Government [wrote to the Committee on 3 September 2024 attaching its memorandum on the Bill](#). It states—

“The Scottish Government is committed to improving outdoor learning provision in Scotland, ensuring that all learners are experiencing regular,

enjoyable, and challenging outdoor learning experiences that are embedded across the 3-18 curriculum. However, we do have reservations concerning certain elements of the proposed approach set out in the Bill that require further and full consideration and assurance, in order that all of the potential implications of the Bill are fully understood. These relate to:

- Legislating in the curriculum;
- A narrow focus on only one type of outdoor learning; and
- Resource implications (feasibility and affordability).

Taking these considerations into account, and given the positive intents of the Bill, the Scottish Government remains neutral at this time concerning passage of the Bill.”

Other committee consideration

Delegated Powers

11. The Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee considered the delegated powers in the Bill at its meeting on 29 October 2024 and [reported to the lead Committee](#) on 1 November 2024, under Rule 9.6.2 of Standing Orders.

Financial Memorandum

12. The Finance and Public Administration Committee issued a call for views on the Financial Memorandum (FM) and received 8 responses which have been [published on the website](#). It is expected that the Finance and Public Administration Committee will report to the lead Committee on the FM in due course.

Next steps

13. The Committee will continue to take evidence on the Bill at its meeting on 27 November 2024.

Committee Clerks November 2024

Annexe A

SPICe

The Information Centre
An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh

Education, Children and Young People Committee

13 November 2024

Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill

Introduction

This paper is to support the Committee at its second evidence session on the Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill. The Committee will take evidence from two panels. The first will comprise of representatives of local government and the teaching profession; the second will comprise of representatives of residential outdoor education centres.

Current provision

In the policy memorandum, the Member in charge of the Bill set out why she considers that the current provision needs to be improved. She said—

- many young children do not get the same opportunities as their peers for financial reasons
- as the provision of residential outdoor education is not mandatory for schools to undertake, it can be a postcode lottery as to whether a child is offered it during their school career or not
- in the absence of legislative provision for these experiences, it is likely that the level of provision will continue to decline, threatening the existence of such experiences for future generations.
(PM Para 97)

The number of pupils who undertake residential outdoor education is not centrally collected. [Education Scotland published a list of contact details](#) for residential outdoor education centres in 2020. This lists 43 centres and indicates that only four are owned by local authorities. The local authorities that were listed as owning their own residential outdoor education centres were: North Ayrshire, Glasgow City Council and the City of Edinburgh Council. The remainder were run by the third sector or privately

owned. The Policy Memorandum also notes that Aberdeenshire Council and South Ayrshire Council operate their own centres. (Para 31)

Local authority provision

Some local authorities that responded to the Committee's call for views described how schools in their organisation arrange and provide outdoor learning including residential outdoor education.

For example, Shetland Islands Council's submission said, "at present Schools do already receive a wide range of outdoor education experiences, which are decided at school level as part of the curriculum and through their approach to learning outdoors." ADES' submission said—

"Schools in local authorities already offer a wide range of outdoor education and residential experiences for young people. This is decided at school level as part of the rationale for its curriculum and its approach to learning outdoors.

"Residential experiences are not always linked to outdoor education and can be linked to other subjects such as history, the arts and geography. Schools currently identify the types of experience offered, how this will be staffed and how it will be funded."

COSLA's submission stated—

"COSLA places a high value on outdoor educational experiences for children and young people. There are a range of approaches across Scotland to outdoor education whether this is through outdoor residential experiences or opportunities to complete awards (including Duke of Edinburgh and John Muir awards), as well as a range of opportunities for children and young people to take part in outdoor education as part of the day-to-day experiences within schools ... Where we have been able to invest in the school and ELC estate - such as the new settings built to support the ELC expansion and the construction of new school campuses - there has been a strong focus on encouraging outdoor learning, through outdoor classrooms and/or mixed use indoor/outdoor ELC settings."

Stirling Council explained that in its area, "many schools use their pupil equity funding to support excursions where these are prioritised and alternative models have been used in schools where several families would struggle with the costs, eg partnership with Scouting groups / fundraising through parent groups."

City of Edinburgh Council owns two outdoor education centres and primary schools in the city routinely undertake outdoor residential in P7. Brunstane Primary School, an Edinburgh primary school where around 85% of the pupils live in SIMD20¹ postcodes, provided a submission to the Committee which said—

"Being able to attend residential outdoor camp allows our children to build their cultural capital and to know that there is a rich, natural environment beyond Edinburgh. It allows our children to see that there is a world beyond the estate that they live in.

"P7 residential camp is generally the highlight for all of our children when they evaluate their year. At residential camp, they build independence skills, confidence, interpersonal skills, overcome barriers such as fear or 'I cant do

¹ I.e. the most deprived quintile.

this'. They try new things - abseiling, mountain biking, pot-holing, canyoning, canoeing, walking in nature.....I could go on.”

Residential Outdoor Education, Outdoor Learning and Learning for Sustainability

Section 1 of the Bill sets out that residential outdoor education would be:

“a course of education that:

has outdoor learning as its main focus,

includes at least 4 overnight stays and 5 days, which may be non-consecutive, in facilities such as (without limitation) outdoor centres, youth hostels, camps or sailing boats, and

is suitable to the relevant pupil’s age, ability, aptitude and any additional support needs.”

The Bill provides that the Government would prepare guidance on the provision of residential outdoor education.

Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre had previously been run by Fife Council and since 2011 it is being run by a charity and social enterprise. It explained how a week-long residential may run at its centre:

“Ideally the week should be leading to a peak experience on the final day, where the learning from the week is realised via a challenge rich day, the success from which can then springboard into the return to home/school, and the successes continue. Skilled facilitation from suitably trained and empathic instructors is vital in this process, as is planning beforehand from the schools to ensure a joined-up approach pre and post residential.”

Last week, Professor Chris Loynes said that the benefits of residential outdoor educational experience accrue because the experience changes the relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers. Dr Roger Scrutton agreed and said that these relationships, which lead to greater collaboration underpin the cognitive benefits of residential outdoor education. This reflected the findings of the 2015 [Learning Away evaluation](#), which found—

“The informal relationships between staff and students that develop on residential, and the relationships between students themselves, lead to impacts that persist long after the return to school. Relationships between students in the playground and the classroom became more constructive, leading to less bullying, better attention and new friendships. Teachers said that they understood their students better and trusted them more; this allowed them to use new teaching methods, some of which were first developed on the residential. Students agreed that they had more trust in and respect for the adults working with them. ...

“The development of resilience, confidence and wellbeing through residential experiences transformed into optimism and constructive attitudes to learning in the classroom. Students often reported increased persistence when they found tasks difficult and more belief in their ability to cope. On occasions groups of students independently planned approaches to support each other’s progress.”

Professor Loynes, again reflecting the findings in Learning away, noted that there was evidence that the involvement of students in the co-design of residential programmes

improved outcomes. He also said residential can support transitions between primary and secondary education.

Dr Scrutton said that there is evidence that girls and pupils from more deprived backgrounds were groups that could benefit more from residential outdoor education.

Last week, Professor Mannion placed a residential outdoor education within the wider concepts of Outdoor Learning and Learning for Sustainability. Outdoor Learning can be considered as any learning that takes place outside. A number of submissions reference a 2010 publication, [Curriculum for Excellence Through Outdoor Learning](#). This stated—

“Outdoor learning experiences are often remembered for a lifetime. Integrating learning and outdoor experiences, whether through play in the immediate grounds or adventures further afield, provides relevance and depth to the curriculum in ways that are difficult to achieve indoors.”

Outdoor Learning policy does include the kind of adventurous activities that the bill is concerned with. It also includes learning in the school grounds or short trips to local outdoor sites and Professor Mannion said that the large majority of outdoor learning that takes place would be in these contexts. He also said that the key to expanding outdoor learning in the broader sense is to support the continuing professional development of teachers in this practice.

Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education’s submission said—

“the residential outdoor education experience occupies a unique and profound space within the outdoor learning journey as described in Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning. This journey describes outdoor learning interventions from early years in school grounds to ambitious overseas adventures in senior phases. The impact and outcomes of the residential element within this journey cannot be understated, replicated or replaced through experiences in school grounds or local green spaces. When used effectively in conjunction with each school community the residential element can enhance and extend all previous outdoor learning experiences and outcomes.

“In a small number of cases the outdoor residential experience may not be the most appropriate for a pupil or group of pupils. In this case SAPOE would recognise the value and impact a high quality residential based around art, music, activity and culture can have.”

Sitting alongside CfE, is Learning for Sustainability (LfS). This [is described as bringing together](#) “sustainable development, outdoor learning and global citizenship.” Last year the Government published [Scotland’s learning for sustainability action plan 2023 to 2030 “Target 2030”](#). This “aims to build an inspiring movement for change so every 3 to 18 place of education becomes a sustainable learning setting by 2030.”

ADES’ submission suggested that the Bill could displace existing activity in relation to outdoor learning and LfS; it said—

“There is a danger that this Bill could move outdoor education into being a single residential week and dilute the very good programmes of outdoor learning already in place such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, John Muir Award and the many curricular opportunities as outlined in the Scottish Government’s Learning for Sustainability Action Plan 2023-2030.”

Linking residential outdoor education to the curriculum experiences before and after the residential has been identified as important to supporting better outcomes from the residential itself.

Scottish Outdoor Education Centres' submission said that learning in its centres is "linked and referenced to the Curriculum for Excellence's Experiences and Outcomes". It continued—

"Outdoor Education is an excellent 'leveller', whereby participants take part on a very equal basis. This is relevant to prior experiences as well as cultural or ethnic backgrounds. Outdoor Education provides a safe transfer of learning for social skills and work-based learning such as pro-social behaviours, team/group working and communication skills. Key skills such as Numeracy and Literacy are evident by using pragmatic experiences such as maps, angles and forces. Environmental learning and conservation is a key learning objective on all outdoor education programmes."

Capacity of Outdoor Education Centres

In [2022, the then Minister for Children and Young People, Clare Haughey MSP, said](#) that following discussions with the sector, in 2023 there was expected to be a "a capacity of 4,400 operational beds in around 50 centres across Scotland" but that this did not "cover the full capacity of the sector, and the bed capacity figure does not take into account seasonal availability." She continued to say that the Government "will continue to engage with the sector and consider how we can more accurately reflect what is on offer to local authorities for bookings for schools and other organisations."

There is no nationally collected and published data on how many pupils take part in residential.

Some respondents to the Committee's call for views questioned whether there is capacity in outdoor education centres to cater for a large increase in the demand. Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres Scotland said—

"The current capacity is focused towards the Primary Seven year group. It is important to note that this does not describe the whole picture, with Centres currently providing a range from Primary 4 to Secondary 6. An implementation plan will be essential to allow Centres the ability to adapt their provision to cater for greater numbers in a wider age range beyond Primary seven. This advice includes everything from bed size to staff capacity to work with wider age ranges. The prospect of hosting a whole secondary year group is restricted to a tiny percentage of the current Centre stock across Scotland."

The season in which residential may take place are limited by the school year and there may be a preference to avoid the colder months. Argyll and Bute Council's submission said, "there requires to be further investigation to ensure sufficient places throughout the year so schools have choice in the most appropriate centre to meet their needs and timing, attending in winter is a notably different experience to spring/summer."

Universal provision would need to ensure that pupils with complex additional support needs or disabilities can be catered for. Glasgow City Council said the Bill needs to "take into account children with ASN, who have complex needs and would require significant support, adaptations to centres, specialist equipment and adapted beds, as well as the additional costs associated with both the health and safety requirements and risk assessments required for each visit." PGL Travel Group said, "the issue really

arises around the ability to house young people with more severe disabilities overnight, facilities simply do not exist in enough numbers currently across the UK to fully cater for this provision.” PGL Travel Group said that should the Bill pass “this would enable businesses to plan with more certainty and be able to adapt or build new facilities to accommodate these guests”.

Flexibility and autonomy

Gaelic and religious instruction and observance are specifically set out in legislation, but generally very little of the curriculum is set out in legislation. Local authorities must make provision for adequate and efficient education in their area (s1 of the [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#)) and in doing so must “secure that the education is directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest potential.” (s2 of the Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc. Act 2000).

Curriculum for Excellence is intended to provide schools and individual teachers with the autonomy to develop the teaching and learning in their classrooms. The school education system is intended to empower local leaders. The 2018 joint agreement between local government and the Scottish Government said—

“Headteachers are the leaders of learning and teaching in their school. They are senior officers of the local authority and have operational responsibility for the service they provide, therefore the majority of decisions should be made at school level.

“Schools are empowered to make the decisions that most affect their children and young people’s outcomes, while being part of a collaborative learning community, the Local Authority and working with others.”

Last week the Committee discussed how some smaller rural schools may prefer to prioritise other activities during a residential trip, such as visiting cities. The panel last week suggested that there should be flexibility in this regard. It is unclear whether the Bill as it is currently drafted would allow for such flexibility.

Provisions of the Bill

The Bill seeks to improve the opportunities for pupils to participate in residential outdoor education. It has three substantial provisions:

- placing a duty on education authorities and managers of grant-aided schools to secure the provision of at least one period of residential outdoor education for each pupil
- placing a duty on Scottish Ministers to prepare and publish guidance on the duty to secure the provision of residential outdoor education
- providing that the Scottish Government provide funding to local authorities and the managers of grant-aided schools to carry out the duty to secure the provision of residential outdoor education.

Pupils would be able to opt-out of residential outdoor education.

The [Scottish Government wrote to the committee setting out its views on the Bill](#). The Government said that that it currently holds a "neutral" position on the Bill. The Government is broadly supportive of the intention of the Bill to improve access to

residential outdoor education. However, the Government expressed reservations around:

- legislating in the curriculum
- a narrow focus on only one type of outdoor learning
- resource implications.

Staffing

The support for school trips, from the perspective of the school, is largely supported by teachers, other staff and parents/carers. Staff will accompany pupils on a voluntary basis. The Committee's call for views included responses from individual teachers who had experience of supporting residential outdoor education, many of whom were very positive about the experiences offered to pupils.

However, some respondents to the Committee's call for views said that the current reliance on volunteers to support trips may not be sustainable if residential outdoor education became a duty on local authorities. It has been argued that requiring teachers to attend would require a change in teachers' terms and conditions, which would need to be agreed nationally through the [SNCT](#). COSLA's submission said—

“At the moment teaching staff support residential trips on a voluntary basis, this approach would not be sustainable should the Bill be passed and duties are placed on local authorities to support trips for all children and young people.

“This would require work through the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) to discuss teachers' terms and conditions, which could be a challenging process to agree.”

ADES' submission said—

“Making part of the curriculum compulsory would necessitate working through the SNCT to revise teachers' terms and conditions. ... Obligatory overnights could be written into terms and conditions for teachers but this change to contracts would be required,. This may become especially challenging where a teacher or member of support staff has family or caring responsibilities. Advice from HR specialist lawyers should be sought to identify the implications for terms and conditions as well as unions being consulted.”

Costs

The Financial Memorandum modelled three areas of additional spend that would arise from the Bill:

- cost of pupils attending residential outdoor education
- transport costs
- costs on the Scottish Government of producing guidance.

The Member estimates that the costs of the Bill after two years of operation would be between £20.4 million and £33.9 million in 2024-25 prices (i.e. not accounting for inflation).

The Outward Bound Trust said that there was a return in terms of “social return on investment”. It said, “for every £1 invested in Outward Bound programmes, there is a return of between £5 and £15 in societal value”.

The Financial Memorandum does not consider the costs of any additional remuneration of teachers to support residential outdoor education. It does consider the costs of providing supply to those schools that do not currently undertake residential outdoor education, but does not model these costs. The FM stated—

“Given this significant level of uncertainty and variation, this Memorandum does not therefore explicitly project figures or costings for overall staff provision.”
(Para 43)

The Scottish Government modelled the costs in the FM taking account of staff costs in secondary schools and inflation. This produced a “central estimate of £32.2m, and a potential cost range of £24.3m – £40.6m for rollout in 2025/26” although the Government continued that this estimate was “based on the Financial Memorandum methodology for centre and transport costs, this is a potential underestimate as stated above. It also does not account for additional costs associated with ASN pupils.” The Government said—

“If the Bill is passed, costs would likely be incurred from financial year 2025/26. This would present an additional significant financial risk to public finances that are already under intense pressure to meet existing Ministerial priorities and commitments. No central funding exists to fund the financial impact of the Bill and its statutory funding obligation on Scottish Ministers – the Bill’s provisions, as currently drafted, are unaffordable.”

Shetland Islands Council’s submission said—

“Having reviewed the accompanying financial memorandum for this Bill we are concerned that some of the estimated costs for delivery of this opportunity e.g. staffing in particular and transport cost for island authorities have not been fully captured in the document. Therefore we believe that it under estimates the full costs of the delivery of this entitlement for schools and local authorities. Additionally, it also does not take account of the costs that parents and/or carers would have to meet in order to prepare their children for the trip e.g. any clothing or equipment required and spending money for food on the travel to the outdoor centre. It is worth highlighting that children from the northern and western Isles of Scotland would have significantly longer travel requirements, including overnight ferry travel to attend mainland outdoor centres, which would increase the length and cost of these trips.”

The Association of Headteachers and Deputies in Scotland said that while it considers “the opportunity to attend such course is of huge benefit to a great many pupils” it does not support the Bill. It said—

“In a time of significant financial constraint, when schools are losing staff and school leadership time, there are priorities which are far higher up the list than this proposal. Currently, if £34m became available to school education, AHDS would argue for every penny to be spent on better supporting pupils with additional support needs.”

Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres highlighted issues in relation to capital funding for outdoor education centres. It said that current market prices for school residential do not include contributions to capital costs for the centres.

The Bill would create a duty on the Scottish Government to “pay education authorities and the managers of grant-aided schools such amounts as are sufficient to enable them to carry out their duties [to provide residential outdoor education]”. A key argument of the Member in charge is that some children are prevented from experiencing residential outdoor education because of financial constraints. NASUWT’s submission said—

“The proposals contained in Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill shine a welcome light on the inequality which currently exists in accessing this provision for all pupils in Scotland. There is no dispute that a disparity of access to outdoor education residential experiences currently exists and, further, that our most vulnerable children and young people are often unlikely to be able to participate.”

CPAG’s submission argued, “when parents are required to pay all or some of the cost of a trip, it is children and young people on lower incomes who are most likely to miss out on these opportunities.” EIS’ submission noted that the costs of attending a residential outdoor education trip can include accessing equipment, it stated—

“EIS members who have led residential outdoor learning activities, such as Duke of Edinburgh awards trips, report that commonly, children and young people – even those not experiencing acute disadvantage – lack the specialist footwear and waterproof clothing that are essential to participate in such trips. Schools therefore have had to invest funds to provide such basics, at considerable outlay. Moreover, the upkeep, maintenance and replenishment of such supplies is a considerable ongoing cost. Teachers report also how spending money remains a key marker of exclusion on school trips; often children and young people will opt-out of subsidised trips to avoid stigma, or, indeed, parents will put themselves in debt to ensure their children are not excluded.”

The [2021-22 Programme for Government](#) said—

“We will make sure that pupils from lower-income families can take part in school trips, providing support for children to go on curriculum-related trips and activities, and Primary 6/7 residential, and giving secondary school pupils the right to go on at least one optional trip during their time at school.” (p38)

This commitment has not been explicitly mentioned in subsequent Programmes for Government. In answer to PQs (e.g. [S6W-25669](#)) on charges for school trips earlier this year, the Government said—

“Statutory responsibility for the delivery of school education, including any school trips, rests with local authorities. Local authority data on the number of schools that have abolished fees for school trips and extra-curricular activities for pupils from lower-income families is not collected centrally.”

Some organisations questioned whether there should be space for some parental contribution. Comunn na Gàidhlig / Spòrs Gàidhlig said that the large majority of funding should come from central sources but “there is nothing wrong in principle with seeking parental contributions, but this has to be very sensitively done, in order not to encourage exclusion because of socio-economic circumstances, multiple children etc.”. SAPOE’s submission said—

“The concept of fully funding the residential should be given careful consideration. Could the value of the residential be devalued if it is free? What are the risks of people’s perception of the educational experience when no cost

is attributed to it? These are important questions to consider when deciding if a marginal cost should be retained.”

Ages, Times of year and duration

Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre supported residentials being 4 nights and five days. It said—

“Pupils need time to settle into their new environment, build up a trust and a relationship with their instructor (which in Ardroy is the same instructor for the week - this is very important), and to allow the learning cycle process to take place. ...

“Anything less than five days is economically tempting (and there has been a movement for centres to deliver shorter residentials to save money), but we would argue this is a false economy due to the compromise in the potential outcomes from a 5 day residential.”

Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres Scotland’s submission said, “over the content, depth of experience and most importantly impact of the residential”. It said that while a 4-night/5-day residential should be the norm, there should be flexibility:

“Local authorities, schools and where appropriate individual classes should be empowered, (supported by appropriate national and local guidance) to develop an approach that caters for their specific needs. Needs that should take into consideration are things such as location, travel time, class outcomes, age of pupils and additional support needs. Essentially the process should put the ‘pupil at the centre’ and the residential should be built around their needs.”

The Outward Bound Trust said that while there may be instances whereby the proposed duration of residential outdoor education may not occur on consecutive nights, it emphasised “that the continuity of experience significantly enhances the impact of the programme, allowing pupils to fully engage with and reflect on their learning.”

ADES’ submission questioned how an entitlement to a minimum number of nights would be tracked for pupils that move school or local authority areas. The City of Edinburgh Council submission said that additional investment would be required to adopt “robust and preferably consistent tracking and monitoring solutions such as the use of Evolve and SEEMIS”.

Smaller schools

Local Government submissions have highlighted a number of “areas still requiring further consideration” in relation to the proposals in the Bill. This included how schools with composite classes would arrange trips. Some rural schools have very low rolls, ADES’ submission stated—

“Single teacher schools could be left without any management in place. If a teaching head in a single teacher school has family/caring responsibilities then who would facilitate the trip? Year groups may have only one pupil, meaning that it would be difficult to consistently offer an experience.”

Quality

A number of responses argued that the bill should be accompanied by a quality framework for residential outdoor education. The Outward Bound Trust argued for the inclusion of “a robust quality framework to ensure that all residential outdoor education experiences deliver high standards and meaningful outcomes for all participants.”

SAPOE’s submission stated—

“It is essential that an educational quality standard is agreed and implemented for Residential Outdoor Education Centres in order to ensure the impact and outcomes of this Bill are met. This standard should include how the relationship between the Centre and the school is formed, nurtured and developed over time. It should ensure that the Centre individualises its program to meet the educational needs of the school and its pupils in line with local and national curricular outcomes. It should ensure that the Centre makes the best use of its local environment and challenges itself to ensure that every child’s experience justifies the expense. This standard should be recognised and identifiable by pupils, parents, teachers, local authorities and importantly the HMIE Inspectorate. It is essential that the inspectorate have a map of how to assess the provision of Residential Outdoor Education and can identify its impact on a child’s education.”

Ned Sharratt, Senior Researcher (Education, Culture), SPICe Research
7 October 2024

Note: Committee briefing papers are provided by SPICe for the use of Scottish Parliament committees and clerking staff. They provide focused information or respond to specific questions or areas of interest to committees and are not intended to offer comprehensive coverage of a subject area.

The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP www.parliament.scot

Annexe B

Submission from City of Edinburgh Council

Do you agree that every local authority school pupil and pupils in grant-aided schools should have the opportunity to attend a course of residential outdoor education?

Agree, or partially agree

The City of Edinburgh Council agrees that every local authority school pupil and pupils in grant-aided schools should have the opportunity to attend a safe, meaningful and high-quality course of residential outdoor education.

The Council believes pupils should experience a residential course at the appropriate point in their education that involves:

- adventures and activity in a contrasting area from where they live to learn in, through and about the outdoors
- opportunities that develop outdoor specific knowledge and skills and skills for learning, life and work
- offsite activity to explore different environments, apply skills in new and varied contexts and actively learn about the Outdoor Access Code; and
- being allocated a well-qualified highly skilled instructor for the entirety of the programme to maximise the impact on developing relationships, improving confidence and maximising outcomes.

The Council's view is that frequent onsite/local experiences, and full day/extended day outdoor provision should not be replaced by overnight residential visits or vice versa. These different dimensions of outdoor learning are complementary to one another so both residential and one day visits have a valuable role in children's education.

The Council considers a four-night / five-day stay to be an appropriate length. This allows for suitable and differentiated breadth, depth and intensity of activity. This length of stay is optimal for participation and inclusion, helping learners develop confidence, skills and relationships in different environments.

Consecutive or non-consecutive days should be at the discretion of each local authority. The Council believes local authorities should be empowered, (supported by appropriate national and local guidance) to develop a strategic approach that reflects its own context, needs and priorities. This would ensure local authorities could provide outdoor learning that is flexible and accommodating of situations that may vary across and within the authority.

Engagement with key stakeholders will be key to success. The City of Edinburgh Council favours consecutive days in most instances.

The Bill does not stipulate what pupils should be entitled to this residential outdoor education as this will be set out in guidance, although the member's preference is that this should apply to all pupils between P6 and S4.

What are your thoughts on the stage at which pupils should be entitled to this residential outdoor education? Do you think this should be set in guidance or should it be on the face of the Bill?

The City of Edinburgh Council believes there should not be a nationally prescribed age range. Each local authority should be supported to develop a strategic approach and local guidance (via consultation) that reflects its context, needs and priorities. This may have a negative or positive impact for the minority of pupils who move between local authorities, but councils could mitigate any loss of opportunity locally. It is the City of Edinburgh Council's view that locally appropriate responses are most impactful, ensuring schools are able to offer appropriate experiences and maximise outcomes. The Council considers that the stage at which pupils are entitled to residential outdoor education should be a local decision set in guidance and not on the face of the Bill.

The Bill requires the Scottish Government to provide funding for the provision of residential outdoor education. What do you think about this measure?

The City of Edinburgh Council agrees with the Bill's requirement to provide funding for the provision of residential outdoor education. A national and consistent funding model will support a consistent approach across Scotland.

Do you have any other comments?

The City of Edinburgh Council considers the following is essential to ensure successful implementation of the Bill:

Regarding the financial memorandum – while acknowledging the challenge of modelling scenarios, the Council believes the current estimates are too low. The primary school allocation of £300 - £400 is considered too low to deliver high-quality provision that maximises impact. Allocations need to consider up to date good practice. The allocation also needs to be at a level that is both affordable for schools but not so low that providers are unable to undertake essential maintenance and investment to maintain and guarantee suitable accommodation and safe delivery across a breadth of outdoor experiences.

The difference between primary and secondary allocations requires further discussion. Having a different allocation for primary and secondary adds a layer of complexity that is disproportionate to the likely outcomes. It could also disadvantage pupils in those authorities that through needs analysis, prioritise primary over secondary (or vice versa) for residential outdoor learning.

Some primary schools are larger than some secondary schools (even within a single local authority area). The allocation should be consistent and set at a rate that ensures centres can provide the quality, breadth, depth and safety to an expected national standard. High volume, low cost/low quality provision could be a consequence of an allocation that is too low, which in the council's view would be detrimental to pupils' experiences. In 2022/23 the average cost was £400. A realistic allocation across the sectors would deliver better value for the public pound. It would also result in provision that meets learners needs consistently. Equity remains a consideration for the lowest income households and schools in more disadvantages areas if the allocation is too low. This applies to the primary and secondary sectors. Schools must be able to offer safe, quality residential outdoor learning provision, and parents need to have confidence in the safety and quality of provision. Differentiated allocations across the sectors, and/or too low an allocation could undermine the ambitions of the Bill.

The Council recognises that food costs for secondary will generally be higher, and some providers may need to invest in a wider range of kit. These costs should be averaged out across the sectors and a realistic, consistent allocation agreed.

The Council believes it is reasonable to apply staffing costs consistently across all schools rather than the proposed differentiated approach. This would align with the

proposed universal funding solution in the Bill and would be a fairer solution for all schools.

Ancillary costs in the Financial Memorandum should not be restricted only to the costs of producing guidance. Consideration needs to be given to other additional costs necessary for:

- providing data for both the authority and Scottish Government
- provision for adopting robust and preferably consistent tracking and monitoring solutions such as the use of Evolve and SEEMIS
- impact research and/or the production of high-quality learning resources and case studies
- robust quality assurance of centres / providers

Consideration should be given to developing a national registration and inspection scheme with a clear set of standards which all providers should be able to demonstrate they meet. The Care Inspectorate framework provides an example of how this could be developed. This is different to questions about outdoor learning in HMI school inspections and is about quality and safety of residential offsite provision. This will provide national standards, benchmarks and expectations and would ensure local authorities, educators and parents/carers have confidence in the quality and safety, safety and value of residential outdoor learning provision.

The proposed national funding solution could have a profound impact on removing financial barriers to participation. Experience and evidence show significant non-financial barriers to participation also exist, for example inclusion of pupils with Additional Support Needs and/or a disability and/or anxiety/mental health difficulties. Many hidden costs at local level are currently partially or fully absorbed by schools but not all schools have the capacity to do so.

Ensuring there is sufficient capacity for high-quality outdoor learning is essential and provision should not be reduced to simply the minimum required number of places / beds available.

Consideration needs to be given to ensuring sufficient capacity is retained for additional residential outdoor learning, such as senior phase pupils undertaking subject specific fieldwork.

Workforce planning is critical to the success of the Bill. Without high-quality specialist instructors, the provision will fall short of reasonable expectations and in worst cases would be unsafe. Since the pandemic, the sector is experiencing a significant shortage of suitable staff. A national workforce plan, developed by stakeholders to support training, recruitment, ongoing professional learning and retention will support the delivery of sufficient high-quality provision.

A high-quality outdoor education residential visit should be integral to a school's curriculum. Visits should not be considered as 'islands of learning' unrelated to the curriculum and longer-term outcomes. Appropriate pre and post residential learning not only maximises attendance but also contributes to wider outcomes. Training, resources and good practice should be developed and shared locally and nationally.

The City of Edinburgh Council is committed to this Bill and offers its support in developing national guidance and resources.

Submission from COSLA

COSLA is the voice of Local Government in Scotland. We are cross-party organisation who champions councils' vital work to secure the resources and powers they need. We work on councils' behalf to focus on the challenges and opportunities they face, and to engage positively with governments and others on policy, funding and legislation.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to Call for Views on the Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill. Whilst we remain strongly supportive of ensuring children and young people can benefit from outdoor educational experience, we have a number of concerns with the approach outlined within the Bill. Primarily these relate to financial costs attached to the Bill – where we believe the current estimate are an underestimate - and practical requirements for local authorities to be able to deliver the new duties set out within the Bill.

Do you agree that every local authority school pupil and pupils in grant-aided schools should have the opportunity to attend a course of residential outdoor education? If so, what are your views on the Bill's proposal that this consists of four overnight stays and five days, not necessarily consecutive?

COSLA places a high value on outdoor educational experiences for children and young people. There are a range of approaches across Scotland to outdoor education whether this is through outdoor residential experiences or opportunities to complete awards (including Duke of Edinburgh and John Muir awards), as well as a range of opportunities for children and young people to take part in outdoor education as part of the day-to-day experiences within schools - a recent report by [Education Scotland](#) captures some example of how this works across Scotland.

Where we have been able to invest in the school and ELC estate - such as the new settings built to support the ELC expansion and the construction of new school campuses - there has been a strong focus on encouraging outdoor learning, through outdoor classrooms and/or mixed use indoor/outdoor ELC settings.

Local Government is also engaged in joint work with the Scottish Government and partners on the Learning for Sustainability agenda and has recently joined the Scottish Government-led working group on outdoor education.

However, due to a range of practical considerations (and their associated financial cost) we are concerned on the approach outlined within the Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill would be very challenging for local authorities and schools to deliver. Primarily these related to:

Staffing – at the moment teaching staff support residential trips on a voluntary basis, this approach would not be sustainable should the Bill be passed and duties are placed on local authorities to support trips for all children and young people.

This would require work through the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) to discuss teachers' terms and conditions, which could be a challenging process to agree.

Whilst further consideration could be required, there would likely be an ask for local authorities to consider additional remuneration over weekends and overnights.

It would also increase the need for staff to cover those who are taking part in trips – this would be a particular issue for composite classes where half the class are eligible and are attending a residential trip whilst others are not.

Capacity - We believe there is further work to be done to understand the capacity across outdoor centres in Scotland. In particular whether there would be sufficient places available for children and young people to attend residential experiences in the spring/summer, as attending in the winter months will be a notably difference experience. If extra capacity is not created, this could require schools and local authorities to make difficult decisions on which children and young people are able to attend at specific times of year.

Should new capacity be required to meet the demand created by the Bill, there is the need for further consideration on whether new assets should be built and operated by local authorities - whilst noting there may be practical challenges (including the challenges to recruit the suitable workforce on an ongoing basis) and that both capital costs to establish new centres and ongoing costs would have to be met by the Scottish Government.

It is likely that there would be additional considerations for rural schools, particularly those on the islands – they will likely face significantly increased transport costs and times. Equally, very small rural schools (such as those with only a single teacher) will face staffing challenges in enabling a residential trip.

The Bill would benefit from further consideration on the likely impact of the expected increase in demand for outdoor residential places on the quality of provision, and how it can be ensured that residential trips are high-quality experiences for children and young people.

Further consideration should be given to how the needs of children and young people with the most significant additional support needs would be met under these duties. Children and young people can have a wide range of additional support needs, and in a small number of cases these are significant and require a great deal of additional support (including higher staff ratios, specialist transport and specific medical support, etc). It will be important that there is the proper consideration of whether existing outdoor residential provision is suitable to meet their needs.

Moreover, we believe there is a tension between the provisions of the Bill, and the broader policy framework of the curriculum in Scotland. The ability of local authorities, school leaders and teachers to design the curriculum to meet the needs of their local communities is at the core of both the Curriculum for Excellence and the School Empowerment agenda. Creating new duties through this legislation does not fit with the existing expectation that schools and local authorities - working with children, young people and their families - are best placed to design and deliver an education that meets the needs of their local areas. The Bill would mean that flexibility on the approach to outdoor residential trips would be removed and may have an opportunity cost where schools are therefore unable to resource another type of residential trip (such as those which are related to history, the arts and geography). Above and beyond the merits of this specific proposal, we are keen that this ability to meet local need is protected.

The Bill does not stipulate what pupils should be entitled to this residential outdoor education as this will be set out in guidance, although the member's preference is that this should apply to all pupils between P6 and S4. What are your thoughts on the stage at which pupils should be entitled to this residential outdoor education? Do you think this should be set in guidance or should it be on the face of the Bill?

As set out above, we have concerns with the approach set out within the bill, and the ability for schools and local authorities to deliver the new duties.

In terms of the age range, it is unclear how local authorities and schools should 'track' which children and young people have received their entitlement to an outdoor residential trip and those who have not. Should the Bill (or subsequent guidance) create a wide age range at which children and young people take part in their residential experience, there will be challenges for local authorities where a child moves to a different local authority area or if different primary schools within a secondary school cluster take different approaches.

Further consideration should be given on how this would be tracked so the correct information is provided to local authorities and schools.

The Bill requires the Scottish Government to provide funding for the provision of residential outdoor education. What do you think about this measure?

As we have set out above, we have concerns with the approach set out within the Bill, and we believe that the financial memorandum at the moment does not fully capture the costs to deliver the duties that would be placed on local authorities.

We are clear that any additional costs associated with the duties must be met by the Scottish Government.

As we have set out in our separate response to the financial memorandum for the Bill, we have the following concerns:

The estimated costs set out in the financial memorandum appear low and have not considered factors such as inflation or demand, which would have the potential to impact on the cost assumptions made.

Necessary changes to contractual terms and conditions for staff and the associated administrative burden, potential for increased salary costs in relation to making this a mandatory obligation and additional staffing resource have not been adequately considered.

The costs pressures resulting from increased demand and need for additional capacity do not seem to have been appropriately factored into the estimated costs for centres.

The impact inflation, demand and location of schools and centres are factors that will affect the overall transportation costs, yet have not been examined.

There will be additional costs associated with facilitating residential outdoor education for children and young people with additional support needs.

A number of ancillary costs and burdens with resource implications have not been included, such as food, clothing, training, risk assessments, insurance and the planning, coordination and booking of these trips.

The Bill is also not clear about the impact of the proposals on the long-standing efforts from councils and schools to tackle the Cost of the School Day. This includes questions on what costs associated with the enabling children and young people to attend outdoor residential trips should be met by schools and councils – including bedding, clothing, food etc.

Any other comments?

We note that the Bill could be commenced by July 2025, we would be concerned that this does not give sufficient time for the development of guidance or to allow local authorities and schools to undertake practical arrangements to enable them to fulfil the new duties – noting the range of concerns highlighted above.

We note that a similar Bill was considered by the Welsh Senedd earlier this year and was rejected due to concerns around financial implications of the duties it imposed and logistical issues for delivery. Whilst the situations are not directly analogous, we believe careful consideration should be given to the reasoning and evidence behind the decision not to pass the Bill in the Welsh Parliament.

In summary, whilst we are strongly supportive of the value of outdoor education for Scotland's children and young people, we are concerned about both the practical ability and the financial costs of placing new duties on local authorities to deliver a residential trip to all children and young people.

We hope that the views outlined above are useful to the Education, Children and Young People Committee as they consider the Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill at Stage One. We are happy to provide further information on our response, if that would be useful to the committee in their deliberations on the Bill.

Submission from NASUWT

The NASUWT welcomes the Education, Children and Young People Committee's call for views on the Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill.

The NASUWT is the largest UK-wide teachers' union representing teachers and school leaders in all sectors of education.

Do you agree that every local authority school pupil and pupils in grant-aided schools should have the opportunity to attend a course of residential outdoor education?

Agree, or partially agree

Outdoor education is an important aspect of a broad and balanced curriculum and should form part of an educational offer available to all pupils. NASUWT recognises that education outside the classroom can provide valuable educational experience and curriculum enrichment, providing it is planned, properly resourced, linked to the curriculum and has clearly identified intended learning outcomes.

When they are properly organised and relevant to the curriculum, educational visits and learning outside the classroom activities can enable pupils to be more engaged and enthusiastic learners.

The NASUWT is concerned that the level of prescription proposed could negatively impact some young people with additional support needs who currently may be facilitated to engage with residential outdoor experiences in part, as a positive support to accommodate learning needs or as a reasonable adjustment. It would be unfortunate if a well-intentioned time mandate resulted in an inadvertent detriment to any learning experience. The proposal should also make clear what the consequence, if any, to the local authority of failing to provide the prescribed level of residential outdoor education is because at the moment this is not clear.

Equally, the Union is mindful of the current financial context, whereby a number of local authorities are proposing significant education budget cuts: some provision that fell short of the full five days would certainly be better than no provision of any outdoor education.

The Bill does not stipulate what pupils should be entitled to this residential outdoor education as this will be set out in guidance, although the member's preference is that this should apply to all pupils between P6 and S4.

What are your thoughts on the stage at which pupils should be entitled to this residential outdoor education? Do you think this should be set in guidance or should it be on the face of the Bill?

The proposals contained in Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill shine a welcome light on the inequality which currently exists in accessing this provision for all pupils in Scotland. There is no dispute that a disparity of access to outdoor education residential experiences currently exists and, further, that our most vulnerable children and young people are often unlikely to be able to participate.

The NASUWT believes that all children and young people have an entitlement to access a broad, balanced, relevant and engaging curriculum. As it stands, due to a myriad of factors including cost to individual families, resourcing at council level and suitability of approach to meet individual pupils' needs, not all pupils are able to access residential

outdoor education: a fairer and more equitable approach which secures the entitlement of all children, without exception, is preferred but this need not stipulate an age range.

Residential outdoor learning, and indeed outdoor learning more broadly, must be pedagogically grounded and part of an approach to learning within schools which seeks to further the aims of Curriculum for Excellence. Given the curriculum is likely to be subject to ongoing review and enhancement, it makes more sense to place recommendations on age and stage within guidance, rather than within the Bill itself - this will also allow flexibility of approach to accommodate the individual needs of pupils.

The Learning for Sustainability Action plan was published in June 2023 and aims to place sustainability at the heart of Scottish education. One of the actions includes 'a new commitment to take further steps to support Outdoor Learning'. It also set out clear support from learners for outdoor learning: 'Learners asked for more opportunities to learn outdoors and be in nature and to be empowered to make actionable changes in their educational settings to fully embrace the ethos of LfS. They also wanted the adults in their lives to take a proactive approach to support them to make those changes.' The Scottish national approach to residential outdoor education needs to dovetail with the LfS Action plan and its aim for every 3-18 place of education to become a Sustainable Learning Setting by 2030.

Looking more closely at the commitments of the LfS Action plan, it is stated that 'The Scottish Government will create a new policy workstream on Outdoor Learning. This work will be supported by a national working group which will report to Scottish Ministers. The Group will be challenged to pursue a range of actions to ensure that all children receive entitlements to outdoor learning in all its forms.' It would make sense that this national working group had a lead role in shaping the residential outdoor guidance. The NASUWT has and will continue to push the Scottish Government to ensure they provide sufficient support, including financial backing, for schools to implement the action plan.

Certainly in section 6B(7) where it states 'Before preparing any guidance or revised guidance under this section, the Scottish Ministers must consult... ', it is notable that teachers and their representatives are glaringly missing: this omission would require to be remedied in any updated Bill. It is insufficient and inappropriate to lump teachers and their representatives under the heading 'any other persons that the Scottish Ministers think appropriate'.

The Bill requires the Scottish Government to provide funding for the provision of residential outdoor education. What do you think about this measure?

Funding is certainly a pre-requisite to implementation, not only to local authorities but also in support of individual families and young people. The cost of living crisis continues to have a substantial impact and many families remain deeply affected. Lists of materials required for an outdoor residential experience can be a substantial barrier to participation and approaches which offer targeted funding and support do not always reach families in need. Poverty is not always seen and those experiencing poverty are not always eligible for support, thinking particularly about the many families experiencing in-work poverty or whose income may fluctuate due to insecurity of work. Indeed, of those who are eligible for some support, many do not wish to claim it because of persistent issues around stigma, shame and accessibility.

Funding will also need to take into consideration the increasing number of children and young people with an additional support need. The needs of each child will be widely

diverse and additional time and consideration needs to be accounted for in advance of any excursion in order to plan appropriately to get it right for every child. This may also require additional staffing or physical supports in order to maximise participation. It is notable that, in Wales, finance was raised as a barrier to progress a statutory right to outdoor education and, further, that a similar Bill in the UK also fell.

Even if sufficient funding is able to be identified and passed to education authorities, this would need to be ring-fenced in order to be protected. At the moment, local authorities receive a block grant from Scottish Government that makes up around 85% of their net revenue expenditure, with the remainder coming mostly from local taxation. Over time, the ring-fencing of education spending has gradually been removed and very little remains targeted. While local authorities continue to propose drastic reductions to their education spending and national promises on teacher numbers are under attack, it would be necessary to ring-fence any identified funding as well as to provide long term funding guarantees. It is worth highlighting also that, if staffing levels reduce, even with targeted ring-fenced funding, outdoor residential experiences may not be practicable or feasible.

Given the limited numbers of local authorities that have been able to maintain outdoor education centres, it is of concern that, if enacted, this Bill may generate a rise in private companies flooding the field, siphoning off public funds and profiteering: this approach has been seen elsewhere within Scottish education, for example, in relation to PEF funding or, indeed, by individuals and companies pedalling particular behaviour approaches.

Funding alone may not be the sole barrier to access and schools and local authorities should be guided to ensure that residential outdoor educational experiences are not inappropriately timed to clash with days or weeks of religious or cultural importance to their local communities. For example, during the Holy month of Ramadan, Muslim staff and pupils will be preparing to abstain from food and water during daylight hours: this can equate to around 15 hours in the UK. Feedback from members indicates that schools are adopting a variety of supportive mechanisms to ensure Muslim pupils, and staff, are best supported during Ramadan, including holding lunch clubs for pupils who do not wish to sit in the canteen watching their friends eat lunch or creating dialogue about Ramadan among the school community. Any guidance on residential outdoor learning must also ensure that schools are engaging with their local communities and are mindful of additional factors such as fasting which could create barriers to engagement.

Diversity must be more than a tick box exercise and within any guidance both schools and providers must be encouraged to meet the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Not only seeking avoid unlawful behaviour that is banned by the Equality Act 2010, including discrimination, harassment and victimisation, but also to advance equal opportunities between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not, as well as fostering good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not. Diversity within the teaching profession remains a key priority for both NASUWT and Scottish education at large, with The Diversity in the Teaching Profession and Education Workforce (DITPEW) subgroup of the Scottish Government's Anti-Racism in Education Programme (AREP) taking forward actions aimed at supporting the education sector to meet the 4% by 2030 target. Given research has shown that black communities are less likely to engage in nature-based outdoor recreation activities, with historic discrimination being a large underlying factor, it is even more important that an intentional approach is adopted.

Do you have any other comments?

The following is taken from the Learning for Sustainability Action Plan:

‘A key message from both educators and learners is that adults need to learn more about sustainability to be able to share this with learners. Professional learning needs to be better at building confidence and capacity.

A focus on "LfS in practice" rather than the theory, is key.

Policy makers, education bodies and relevant partners must ensure that there is support for all those progressing on this journey’.

A joined-up approach to outdoor learning, learning for sustainability and outdoor residential education is required and, further, this must be underpinned by appropriate access to professional learning, practical guidance and sufficient funding.

Finally, it is important to note that, because of the great personal and professional risks involved, our advice to our teacher members is that they should always be advised not to participate in visits and journeys that are non-contractual, do not have clear educational outcomes and do not require the exercise of the teacher’s professional skills and judgement.

Further, any such activities which do take place must be approved in accordance with local authority procedures. All visits must be checked to ensure there is a specific and stated objective and, further, that all relevant regulations and guidelines, including the school/authority’s own health and safety policy are abided by.

Submission from SAPOE - Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education

The Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education (SAPOE) is the forum where Scotland's outdoor learning community collaborates to develop best practice in the design and safe delivery of outdoor learning for all children and young people in Scotland.

Together we:

- support Local Authorities in the development of outdoor learning as part of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)
- promote and develop consistent good practice across Scotland for off-site visits through the implementation of the framework Going Out There support the provision of adventure activities and residential outdoor centres
- champion the impact and value of outdoor learning across education, recreation, tourism and communities, and as part of Scotland's blue and green economies
- provide a collective voice for Scotland's outdoor learning sector.
-

Do you agree that every local authority school pupil and pupils in grant-aided schools should have the opportunity to attend a course of residential outdoor education?

Agree, or partially agree

SAPOE agrees that every local authority school pupil and pupils in grant-aided schools should have the opportunity to attend a safe, meaningful and high-quality course of residential outdoor education.

SAPOE believes that the residential outdoor education experience occupies a unique and profound space within the outdoor learning journey as described in Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning. This journey describes outdoor learning interventions from early years in school grounds to ambitious overseas adventures in senior phases. The impact and outcomes of the residential element within this journey cannot be understated, replicated or replaced through experiences in school grounds or local green spaces. When used effectively in conjunction with each school community the residential element can enhance and extend all previous outdoor learning experiences and outcomes.

In a small number of cases the outdoor residential experience may not be the most appropriate for a pupil or group of pupils. In this case SAPOE would recognise the value and impact a high quality residential based around art, music, activity and culture can have.

The length of stay has a direct influence over the content, depth of experience and most importantly impact of the outdoor residential. Benefits to pupils will increase significantly with each additional night away. It is for this reason that the residential should consist of four overnight stays and five days.

Immersion in residential outdoor education that is removed from a child's normal home environment can be used to target resilience, confidence, desire to learn, relationships with teaching staff, behaviour, learning for sustainability and a wide range of curricula subject areas. Our experience and research tells us that the return on these targeted outcomes increases significantly with length of stay.

The length of stay also has an impact on the breadth, range and environment that each outdoor journey/activity can achieve. This length of stay will allow centres to build programmes that can effectively access a wide range of activities and environments that will allow for individual needs, inclusion and achieving chosen school outcomes.

Consecutive or non-consecutive days should be at the discretion of each local authority and learning community. SAPOE believes local authorities, schools and, where appropriate, individual classes should be empowered, (supported by appropriate national and local guidance) to develop an approach that caters for their specific needs. Consideration should be given to location, travel time, class outcomes, age of pupils and additional support needs.

Essentially the process should put the pupil first and the residential should be built around their needs.

SAPOE favours consecutive days in most instances but recognises that this may not be appropriate for some user groups/individuals.

The Bill does not stipulate what pupils should be entitled to this residential outdoor education as this will be set out in guidance, although the member's preference is that this should apply to all pupils between P6 and S4.

What are your thoughts on the stage at which pupils should be entitled to this residential outdoor education? Do you think this should be set in guidance or should it be on the face of the Bill?

SAPOE believes there should not be a nationally prescribed age range. Each local authority should be supported to develop a strategic approach and local guidance (via consultation) that reflects its context, needs and priorities.

Consideration should be given to the impact of children moving between local authorities and/or schools. There is no simple solution to this and essentially local authorities must seek to mitigate these issues locally.

The Bill requires the Scottish Government to provide funding for the provision of residential outdoor education. What do you think about this measure?

SAPOE agrees with the Bill's requirement to provide funding for the provision of residential outdoor education. A national and consistent funding model will support a consistent approach across Scotland. The genesis and core purpose of this Bill is to address the financial inequality that Local Authorities, Learning Communities, Teachers and Parents face when choosing to pursue residential outdoor education as part of a child's education. A child's access to residential outdoor education should not be determined by the financial security of their parent/carer.

Do you have any other comments?

SAPOE believes that consideration should be given to the significant social impact and cost recovery from across the Scottish Government financial portfolio. Impacts include increased school attendance, improved teacher/pupil relationships, improved family connections, improved participation in physical activity, better connection with nature and learning for sustainability targets.

It is essential that an educational quality standard is agreed and implemented for Residential Outdoor Education Centres in order to ensure the impact and outcomes of this Bill are met. This standard should include how the relationship between the Centre

and the school is formed, nurtured and developed over time. It should ensure that the Centre individualises its program to meet the educational needs of the school and its pupils in line with local and national curricular outcomes. It should ensure that the Centre makes the best use of its local environment and challenges itself to ensure that every child's experience justifies the expense. This standard should be recognised and identifiable by pupils, parents, teachers, local authorities and importantly the HMIE Inspectorate. It is essential that the inspectorate have a map of how to assess the provision of Residential Outdoor Education and can identify its impact on a child's education.

The concept of fully funding the residential should be given careful consideration. Could the value of the residential be devalued if it is free? What are the risks of people's perception of the educational experience when no cost is attributed to it? These are important questions to consider when deciding if a marginal cost should be retained.

Local Authorities should be the key ingredient in managing the implementation of the Bill. They will need to be instrumental in designing a strategy that best suits their location and regional variability. They will also be key in managing the finance and ensuring that each pupil receives a share that ensures equity. Building partnerships with existing Third Sector and Private Centres will be key to managing capacity where no Local Authority provision exists.

SAPOE is committed to this Bill and offers its support in developing national guidance and resources.

Submission from Shetland Islands Council

Do you agree that every local authority school pupil and pupils in grant-aided schools should have the opportunity to attend a course of residential outdoor education?

Agree, or partially agree

Yes we agree that for educational and developmental reasons that every pupil from a Local authority school or grant-aided school should have the opportunity to attend a course of residential outdoor education throughout their time at school. We believe this would be a good investment in their future through the skills and experience's they could gain.

We also agree that the preferred model consisting of four overnight stays and five days of outdoor education would be of great value to pupils because of the immersive nature of such trips. However, we also believe that the proposal should be flexible and allow for different models of delivery such as

non-consecutive overnights stays over a longer period. This would allow more scope for schools and local authorities to deliver the outdoor education opportunity, but perhaps in a more achievable way for all pupils.

At present Schools do already receive a wide range of outdoor education experiences, which are decided at school level as part of the curriculum and through their approach to learning outdoors.

With regards to the draft Bill there are a number of practical and financial consideration that have not been addressed and would need to be in place before the provision could be implemented. There are also many questions left unanswered and it is unclear if enough preparatory work has been undertaken to show the full extent of how deliverable this Bill's proposal would be if some key principles are not addressed in advance.

Below are a few of the areas still requiring further consideration.

Terms and Conditions for teachers and support staff

Making part of the curriculum compulsory would necessitate working through the SNCT to revise teachers' terms and conditions. Currently trips are staffed (and attended) on a voluntary basis but this would change under this Bill's proposal, making attendance on residential trips compulsory for staff. Obligatory overnights could be written into terms and conditions for teachers but a change to contracts would be required. This may become especially challenging where a teacher or member of support staff has family or caring responsibilities. Advice from HR specialist lawyers should be sought to identify the implications for terms and conditions as well as unions being consulted. There is no evidence of any of this preparatory work having been undertaken.

Current Provision of Outdoor Education in Schools

There is a danger that this Bill could move outdoor education into being a single residential week and dilute the very good programmes of outdoor learning already in place such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, John Muir Award and the many other curricular opportunities.

Capacity in Current Residential Centres

It is unclear whether the preparatory work has been undertaken to be sure that we have capacity in our centres, or capital funding to build new centres to accommodate a residential experience as is laid out in the Bill proposal. Many local authorities over the last decade have had to close their residential centres due to the high costs of keeping these facilities running.

Quantity versus Quality

There is a real concern that the increase in quantity will impact on quality. It may be challenging to staff enough centres with the current level of trained and qualified workforce and therefore it could lead to a reduction in the quality of the available workforce. Outdoor Residential Centres require to be inspected and need to have a variety of Health and Safety and other certifications. Is there capacity in the system to carry out increased training, inspections etc. The Bill doesn't mention inspections or quality of provision and further preparatory work should be undertaken to investigate the capacity within the system.

Changes of schools

If a young person changes school then they could end up in a school which had already had the residential experience or a school which was yet to have the experience resulting in either duplication or omission. By splitting the experiences into those who experience in primary and those who experience in secondary you are essentially having to create a dual system where cluster schools would have to work together and any changes could not be accommodated. How would a pupil's nights away be aggregated? If one school does 3 nights one year and 2 nights another and the pupil changes school – who would be responsible for tracking this and how would any shortfall be made up. A fixed number of days may be hard to track as an entitlement.

The Bill does not stipulate what pupils should be entitled to this residential outdoor education as this will be set out in guidance, although the member's preference is that this should apply to all pupils between P6 and S4.

What are your thoughts on the stage at which pupils should be entitled to this residential outdoor education? Do you think this should be set in guidance or should it be on the face of the Bill?

We agree that in the main it would be more beneficial for children in the upper primary and lower secondary stage to participate in a residential outdoor education trip. However, because of the diverse nature of our schools, including some very small outer island schools, with low numbers of pupils in a composite class, it would be beneficial to retain an element of flexibility to allow whole school groups to participate in a residential outdoor education trip. This flexibility would significantly simplify the delivery of the activity and reduce its cost, by allowing whole schools and their teaching and support staff to participate in the activity, rather than having to split the class over the period of the trip.

Other areas requiring further consideration are set out below.

Composite classes

Primary schools will have composite classes. This could mean that children are left behind if only one year group attends. In such circumstances it would

require a full week teaching cover for those children not attending, it does not appear that this has been factored into the costings.

Timing of trips

Currently there is a huge differential in price, depending on the time of year a centre is accessed. It is basically cheaper in the colder months of the year. How would places be allocated at centres and who would decide which school attended when?

Small rural schools

Single teacher schools could be left without any management in place. If a teaching head in a single teacher school has family/caring responsibilities then who would facilitate the trip? Year groups in rural schools may have only one pupil, meaning that it would be difficult to consistently offer a meaningful experience.

Pupils who do not wish to go

If a pupil does not wish to attend, then what would happen? Currently there is no requirement for pupils to attend. Any pupil not attending would mean potentially an additional cost for cover arrangements. What would happen if the pupil when older wanted to access a trip, does their first offer count as their only offer, who will track this in clusters or for children moving schools?

The Bill requires the Scottish Government to provide funding for the provision of residential outdoor education. What do you think about this measure?

In order to deliver this entitlement it would be essential for the Scottish Government to fully fund this provision with new money, as local authorities and schools do not have the financial resources to deliver their current requirements.

Additionally, if the aspiration of this bill is to ensure that every child in Scotland is given the opportunity to participate in a residential outdoor education experience, then a fully funded universal model is the only means of guaranteeing that every child, regardless of their circumstances, will be able to participate.

Other comments:

Transport

Costs of transport fluctuate hugely and can be difficult to secure. Transport costs in winter may be cheaper but it's unclear how the proposal in the Bill would make allowances for different funding scenarios in different situations for different local authorities.

Cancellation of courses due to adverse weather or illness.

Currently there is a cancellation policy and insurance to cover adverse weather and whilst disappointing, sometimes trips cannot be rearranged because of capacity. If trips for classes were cancelled what would be the entitlement. The assumptions do not take into account repeat visits by either individual pupils or whole cohorts. Similarly if a child is ill what would the expected provision be and who would be responsible for delivery?

Overtime payments

Without doubt, if a residential outdoor education trip became compulsory rather than voluntary staff would expect payment. Presumably the payment would be overtime and

the rate of pay would need to be identified. The financial considerations do not take into account any overtime payments for staff.

ASN

Children with ASN who have complex needs would require significant support and potential medical interventions. This could make the cost per child with ASN extremely expensive. The ratio at some after school clubs can be 2-1 or as much as 3-1 per child. This cost has not been factored into consideration. Similarly it is not known if there are enough specially adapted beds etc. for a residential experience for those with severe and complex needs. Specially adapted ASN transport would also be needed to provide transport to schools, taking pupils to residential centres. This can be complicated and expensive to procure and this has not been factored not considerations.

Bureaucracy

There would be a significant extra cost to current or new centres in completing health and safety requirements, risk assessments for each visit. Local authorities would require extra staffing to support the risk assessment procedures for larger numbers of residential experiences to take place.

Do you have any other comments?

Having reviewed the accompanying financial memorandum for this Bill we are concerned that some of the estimated costs for delivery of this opportunity e.g. staffing in particular and transport cost for island authorities have not been fully captured in the document. Therefore we believe that it under estimates the full costs of the delivery of this entitlement for schools and local authorities. Additionally, it also does not take account of the costs that parents and/ or carers would have to meet in order to prepare their children for the trip e.g. any clothing or equipment required and spending money for food on the travel to the outdoor centre. It is worth highlighting that children from the northern and western Isles of Scotland would have significantly longer travel requirements, including overnight ferry travel to attend mainland outdoor centres, which would increase the length and cost of these trips.

Therefore, some thought in this Bill should be given as to how authorities could be funded to provide this entitlement within their local area, using existing facilities and services, which may need some investment to make them ready to accommodate larger numbers of pupils and staff on an annual basis. This could include investment in accommodation facilities particularly to meet the needs of pupils with ASN's, outdoor education equipment and staffing.

The consultation on the Bill previously highlighted the main problems with this proposal. In general the consultation was opposed to the level of resource required to make this a compulsory experience, the impact it would have on staff where it would be mandatory for them to attend and stay away from their family or caring responsibilities and still unclear about any overtime payments.. The previous consultation responses also outlined the impact the proposal this Bill could have on other cross curricular activity that currently supports other types of residential trips.

The proposal in the Bill suggests that guidance would be completed within 3 months of the Bill and is expected to commence in 2025. With the number of unanswered questions in this response it is clear that this would not be sufficient time to agree a way forward with a financial memorandum that would allow the Bill to be agreed and implemented.

Submission from Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre

Ardroy OEC is on the shores of Loch Goil, about 1.5 miles from Lochgoilhead in Argyll. Opened in 1969 we deliver residential to approx 2,500 people a year.

We were originally set up by Fife Council in 1969, but in July 2011 they withdrew all of our funding (approx. one third of our turnover) and all staff were made redundant. This has been a recurring theme - in the 1980's there were approx. 70 Local Authority Centres in Scotland, currently there are 9. (Source - <https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/proposed-members-bills/liz-smith-consultation-document-final.pdf>)

After a short period of closure we reopened in Nov 2011 as a charity & social enterprise. Our normal model is a five day (Mon-Fri) stay, but we offer long weekends, and operate year round. We largely work with Primary Schools, but our client groups include Secondary Schools & Youth Groups. We are in a three year partnership with Children 1st, working with families in crisis and utilising the therapeutic value of the outdoors.

Do you agree that every local authority school pupil and pupils in grant-aided schools should have the opportunity to attend a course of residential outdoor education?

Agree, or partially agree

We see the evidence of the power of a five day residential on a (unsurprisingly!) weekly basis. Pupils need time to settle into their new environment, build up a trust and a relationship with their instructor (which in Ardroy is the same instructor for the week - this is very important), and to allow the learning cycle process to take place.

Ideally the week should be leading to a peak experience on the final day, where the learning from the week is realised via a challenge rich day, the success from which can then springboard into the return to home/school, and the successes continue. Skilled facilitation from suitably trained and empathic instructors is vital in this process, as is planning beforehand from the schools to ensure a joined up approach pre and post residential.

Anything less than five days is economically tempting (and there has been a movement for centres to deliver shorter residential to save money), but we would argue this is a false economy due to the compromise in the potential outcomes from a 5 day residential.

The Bill does not stipulate what pupils should be entitled to this residential outdoor education as this will be set out in guidance, although the member's preference is that this should apply to all pupils between P6 and S4.

What are your thoughts on the stage at which pupils should be entitled to this residential outdoor education? Do you think this should be set in guidance or should it be on the face of the Bill?

All the evidence points toward the P6-S4 age range being the most formative. Younger children may not have the resilience or emotional intelligence to fully benefit from a residential, and given the BGE generally concludes by S3/4, children are regrettably more exam focused in S5/6.

Our view is it should be set in guidance, rather than mandated. All ages benefit from a residential in different ways, providing enough consultation takes place prior, but for the desired outcomes and benefits to be realised, we would agree that P6-S4 is the optimum age range.

The Bill requires the Scottish Government to provide funding for the provision of residential outdoor education. What do you think about this measure?

There is strong evidence that residential have long term positive benefits for a learners well being, mental health, environmental awareness, especially at a formative period as proposed in the Bill. As a simple snapshot Ardroy collects post residential impact data from schools three weeks after the event, and this is written up in our annual Impact Report at <https://www.ardroy-oec.co.uk/reviews.asp>

The term is 'a preventative spend'. When we consider that approx 36% of all Scottish schoolchildren have an ASN diagnosis, and CAMHS are swamped, then the downstream benefit to child's well being, resilience, emotional intelligence has the potential to save money in the long run. The Bill has the potential to make "Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow up and that means ensuring every child has an equal chance to succeed." (Scottish Govt publication).

The current model is that parents pay for, or at best contribute to the cost of a residential. The evidence that PEF money is used is patchy, and very infrequent in the local authority we work with most. This means that children in lower SMID areas (eg the bottom quintile) are often excluded from attending, ironically in areas where deprivation can lead to higher than normal levels of anxiety & depression. The need for transformative impactful experiences such as a residential are greatest in these areas.

The 2021 SNP manifesto said the following. "Going forward we will ensure that less-well off families do not face costs for curriculum related trips and activities and that all pupils are able to attend 'rite of passage'trips, such as P7 residential. We will also introduce a minimum entitlement for all secondary pupils to attend at least one 'optional'trip during their time at school so that all pupils get to benefit from these enriching learning experiences."

Do you have any other comments?

We view this as a once in a lifetime opportunity to make a transformational change to both the Outdoor Education Industry in Scotland AND the life chances of its young learners.

Evidence clearly shows that the delivery of residential Outdoor Education has been in decline in Scotland since the early 80's. What was once a relatively well Govt funded facility has now gone out to the third sector, where margins are tight, salaries of staff are low, and turnover of staff are high. We would encourage the SG to make a bold decision, and a preventative spend now will make a huge impact on the future life chances of children.

We would also hope that there would be good quality assurance if the bill was to pass - we would welcome inspection from HMI or a similar body to ensure that proper educational residential that enhanced the core curriculum were being delivered, rather than just an 'experience'.

Submission from Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres (AHOEC) Scotland

AHOEC Scotland is the Scottish home nation section of AHOEC UK. It represents those in strategic and operational leadership roles within the Scottish Outdoor Learning sector. The focus of its membership incorporate one or more Outdoor Residential Centre in their business model. Its membership currently operate within Local Government, Private and Third Sector organisations. Its membership and national representation has significantly increased since the pandemic and it now leads and consults on national policy in connection Residential Outdoor Learning.

AHOEC National

Quality in outdoor education and learning

Originally founded in 1963 as the Association of Wardens of Mountain Centres, The Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres (AHOEC) is an association of leaders in outdoor learning – most of these leaders hold senior positions in outdoor learning provisions across the UK. Members come from a variety of backgrounds and organisations in outdoor education ranging from statutory, private and charity sectors as well as the wider educational community.

AHOEC-Outdoor- education-about-us

Our members

Our members are committed to quality in outdoor learning, to inspirational experiences, challenging activities, excitement and fun, all with a lifelong positive impact.

Together AHOEC represents over 170 outdoor learning organisations, centres and providers. These organisations are focused on both quality and learning; places where you can be guaranteed to find the best outdoor experiences available in Britain today. They work in some of the most inspirational and beautiful parts of the UK employing gifted staff, where you will find the AHOEC values of quality, challenge and learning both expressed and delivered.

Champions of Outdoor Learning

The AHOEC is committed to championing high quality outdoor learning at all levels, from influencing decision makers to introducing young people and their families to new outdoor activities. We strive to create and develop a healthy culture intelligently balancing education, fun, safety, risk, inclusion, challenge and adventure.

Do you agree that every local authority school pupil and pupils in grant-aided schools should have the opportunity to attend a course of residential outdoor education?

Agree, or partially agree

AHOEC Scotland agrees that every local authority school pupil and pupils in grant-aided schools should have the opportunity to attend a safe, meaningful and high-quality course of residential outdoor education.

AHOEC Scotland believe that the Residential Outdoor Education experience occupies a unique and profound space within the outdoor learning journey as described in

Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning. This journey describes outdoor learning interventions from early years, in school grounds to ambitious overseas adventures in senior phases. The impact and outcomes of the residential element within this journey cannot be understated, replicated or replaced through other experiences, such as in school grounds or local green spaces. When used effectively in conjunction with each school community the residential element can enhance and extend all previous outdoor learning outcomes. Please see the current Blairvadach Impact Report for real examples of this effect (https://www.blairvadach.org.uk/Content/UserGenerated/Image/Downloads/Impact_report_2024/GCC_BlairvadachImpactReport202324.pdf).

The length of stay has a direct influence over the content, depth of experience and most importantly impact of the residential. Pupils' gain will increase significantly with each additional night. It is for this reason that the residential should consist of four overnight stays and five days. Immersion in residential outdoor education that is outwith the child's normal home environment can be used to target resilience, confidence and the desire to learn. It can also enhance relationships with teaching staff, improve behaviour, increase learning for sustainability, as well as developing transferable skills in a wide range of curricular areas. Our experience tells us that the return on these targeted outcomes increases significantly with length of stay.

The length of stay also has an impact on the breadth, range and environment that each outdoor journey/activity can achieve. This length of stay will allow Centres to build programmes that can effectively access a wide range of activities and environments that will allow for individual needs, inclusion and achieving chosen school outcomes.

Consecutive or non-consecutive days should be at the discretion of each local authority and learning community. AHOEC Scotland believes that local authorities, schools and where appropriate individual classes should be empowered, (supported by appropriate national and local guidance) to develop an approach that caters for their specific needs. Needs that should take into consideration are things such as location, travel time, class outcomes, age of pupils and additional support needs. Essentially the process should put the 'pupil at the centre' and the residential should be built around their needs.

AHOEC Scotland favours consecutive days in most instances.

The Bill does not stipulate what pupils should be entitled to this residential outdoor education as this will be set out in guidance, although the member's preference is that this should apply to all pupils between P6 and S4.

What are your thoughts on the stage at which pupils should be entitled to this residential outdoor education? Do you think this should be set in guidance or should it be on the face of the Bill?

AHOEC Scotland believes there should not be a nationally prescribed age range. Each local authority should be supported to develop a strategic approach and local guidance (via consultation) that reflects its context, needs and priorities.

Thought should be given for the impact of children moving between local authorities and/or schools. There is no simple solution to this and essentially Local Authorities must seek to mitigate these issues locally.

The current capacity and infrastructure of the Outdoor Education Residential sector should be considered when answering this question. The current capacity is focused towards the Primary Seven year group. It is important to note that this does not describe

the whole picture, with Centres currently providing a range from Primary 4 to Secondary 6. An implementation plan will be essential to allow Centres the ability to adapt their provision to cater for greater numbers in a wider age range beyond Primary seven. This advice includes everything from bed size to staff capacity to work with wider age ranges. The prospect of hosting a whole secondary year group is restricted to a tiny percentage of the current Centre stock across Scotland.

Recognition should be given as to how Centres in different market sectors will be able to manage these adaptations. This is especially focused on the Third Sector Centres who will need support and a timeline to manage this great new opportunity.

Consideration should also be given as to how the age range included in the Bill will impact on the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and how the two will have independent identities or could be mutually supportive.

AHOEC Scotland considers that the stage at which pupils are entitled to residential outdoor education should be a local decision based on guidance and not on the face of the Bill.

The Bill requires the Scottish Government to provide funding for the provision of residential outdoor education. What do you think about this measure?

AHOEC Scotland agrees with the Bill's requirement for the Scottish Government to provide funding for the provision of residential outdoor education. An equitable funding model will support a consistent approach across Scotland. The genesis and core purpose of this Bill is to address the financial inequality that Local Authorities, Learning Communities, Teachers and Parents face when choosing to pursue Residential Outdoor Education as part of a child's education. It is the opinion of AHOEC Scotland that Residential Outdoor Education can supply the most memorable and high impact experiences of a child's time in the school system. A child's access to Residential Outdoor Education should not therefore be determined by the financial security of their parent/carer.

Do you have any other comments?

AHOEC Scotland believe that consideration should be given to the significant social impact and cost recovery from across the Scottish Government financial portfolio. Impacts from increased school attendance, better quality teacher/pupil relationships, enhanced family connections, greater participation in physical activity, strengthened connections with nature and learning for sustainability targets. Evidence and detail of this Social Return on Investment can be found here

(<https://www.outwardbound.org.uk/assets/pdf/uploads/Impact/Outward-Bound-International-Generating-a-Global-Social-Return-on-Investment.pdf>). The downstream benefits of investing in Residential Outdoor Education should be a priority when reviewing the social and financial value of this Bill.

It is essential that an educational quality standard is agreed and implemented to Residential Outdoor Education Centres, to ensure the impact and outcomes of this Bill are met. This standard should look to include how the relationship between the Centre and the school is formed, nurtured and developed over time. It should ensure that the Centre individualises its program to meet the educational needs of the school and its pupils in line with local and national curricular outcomes. It should look to ensure that the Centre makes the best use of its local environment and challenges itself to ensure that every child's experience justifies the expense. Recognising quality for the depth

of experience will also be essential when programming school groups throughout the year as opposed to some established models of only going in summer. This standard should be recognised and identifiable by pupils, parents, teachers, local authorities and importantly the HMIE Inspectorate. It is essential that the inspectorate have a map of how to assess the provision of Residential Outdoor Education and can identify its impact on a child's education.

Regarding the financial memorandum – AHOEC Scotland would like to highlight how the current market price of a Residential Outdoor Education Course contains minimal if any contribution to capital cost. The current price is based on covering operational costs with different organisational structures managing capital in alternative income streams. The market price cannot currently cope with the inclusion of capital contribution due to the pressure on all schools to keep the price as low as possible to ensure inclusion. Local Authority Centres rely on accessing Capital funding in ever increasing challenging circumstances. Many Third Sector Centres rely on separate charitable functions, donations and activities to address all their capital requirements. The absence of these capital income streams causes the biggest threat to the closure of Scotland's Residential Centres. The Bill will potentially need to consider Capital funding separately to the pupil allocation that will cover revenue costs.

The primary school allocation of £ 300 - £ 400 is thought to be too low to deliver high-quality provision that maximises impact. Allocations need to consider up to date good practice, equipment that can access challenging environments, transport solutions that can allow access to wild spaces - yet aspire to national Net Zero targets, pupil equity and additional support needs. The ambition of total inclusion of additional support needs will require significant increases in this figure.

The difference between primary and secondary allocations requires further discussion. Having a different allocation for primary and secondary adds a layer of complexity that is disproportionate to the likely outcomes. It could also disadvantage pupils in those authorities that through needs analysis, prioritise primary over secondary (or vice versa) for residential outdoor learning. Some primary schools are larger than some secondary schools (even within a single local authority area). The allocation should be consistent and set at a rate that ensures centres can provide the quality, breadth, depth and safety to an expected national standard. High volume, low cost/low quality provision could be a consequence of an allocation that is too low, which in AHOEC's view would be detrimental to pupils' experiences. In 2022/23 the average cost was £ 400. A realistic allocation across the sectors would deliver better value for the public pound. It would also result in provision that meets learners needs consistently. Equity remains a consideration for the lowest income households and schools in more disadvantaged areas if the allocation is too low. This applies to the primary and secondary sectors. Schools must be able to offer safe, quality residential outdoor learning provision, and parents need to have confidence in the safety and quality of provision. Differentiated allocations across the sectors, and/or too low an allocation could undermine the ambitions of the Bill.

The concept of fully funding the Residential should be given careful consideration. Could the perceived value of the Residential be devalued if it is completely free? What are the risks of people's perception of the educational experience when no cost is attributed to it? These are important questions to think about when deciding if a marginal cost should be retained.

The knowledge base of AHOEC Scotland recognises that workforce is the key ingredient to ensuring quality of provision and achieving outcomes. The workforce is

our biggest concern for capacity building and the Bill implementation plan will need to carefully look at this aspect. We believe it can be achieved with good planning and working with key partners from the further education and University sector.

The concept of inclusion needs special attention. Scotland has never hosted a dedicated additional needs Centre like those in England (Calvert Trust), but has adapted its practice to allow participation alongside mainstream children. Centres can gain support and advice from key partners like Equal Adventure, but not all high-level need requirements are currently financially accessible by AHOEC members. All Centres will need capital investment to adapt their practice, buildings, staffing and equipment to allow for the range of additional support needs that currently exist if the Bill were to be fully inclusive.

Local Authorities should be the key ingredient in managing the implementation of the Bill. They will need to be instrumental in designing a strategy that best suits their location and regional variability. They will also be key in managing the finance and ensuring that each pupil receives a share that ensures fairness. Building partnerships with existing Third Sector and Private Centres will be key to managing capacity where no Local Authority provision is present.

AHOEC Scotland is committed to this Bill and offers its support in developing national guidance and resources.

Submission from the Outward Bound Trust

The Outward Bound Trust inspires young people to realise their potential through learning and adventure in the outdoors. Partnering with schools, colleges, employers and youth groups we teach the most important lesson a young person could ever learn: to believe in themselves. As a charity, we do not let financial need stand in the way of participation, with over 80% of attendees receiving funding to come on courses, empowering them to succeed for themselves, their communities and society.

Outward Bound's first school was founded in 1941 in Aberdyfi, Wales by Kurt Hahn and Lawrence Holt to save young lives threatened during World War II. As of 2024, we have grown in the UK to have 6 Centres in the Scottish Highlands, Eryri/Snowdonia and the Lake District, positively impacting the lives of 25,000 young people per year. In Scotland, our residential operation is delivered from our Centre on the shores of Loch Eil and supported by our fundraising team based in Glasgow. We also deliver the Mark Scott Leadership for Life Award.

Do you agree that every local authority school pupil and pupils in grant-aided schools should have the opportunity to attend a course of residential outdoor education?

Agree, or partially agree

The Outward Bound Trust strongly supports the proposal that every local authority school pupil and pupils in grant-aided schools should have the opportunity to attend a course of residential outdoor education. The benefits of such experiences are profound and well-documented. These courses provide essential opportunities for young people to develop resilience, confidence, and a connection to the natural environment—qualities that are increasingly critical in today's world.

Regarding the Bill's proposal that this consists of four overnight stays and five days, we believe that this duration is appropriate and necessary to create a meaningful and immersive experience. While we recognise that these days do not need to be consecutive, we emphasise that the continuity of experience significantly enhances the impact of the programme, allowing pupils to fully engage with and reflect on their learning.

The Bill does not stipulate what pupils should be entitled to this residential outdoor education as this will be set out in guidance, although the member's preference is that this should apply to all pupils between P6 and S4.

What are your thoughts on the stage at which pupils should be entitled to this residential outdoor education? Do you think this should be set in guidance or should it be on the face of the Bill?

We believe that the stage at which pupils should be entitled to residential outdoor education should be guided by developmental appropriateness and the potential for impact. The preference for this entitlement to apply to all pupils between P6 and S4 is sensible, as it covers a crucial period of personal and social development. While the specific stage could be set in guidance to allow flexibility based on local needs and circumstances, we advocate for a clear commitment within the Bill to ensure that this entitlement is universally accessible. This balance will ensure that all pupils benefit from this experience at the most impactful stage of their education.

The Bill requires the Scottish Government to provide funding for the provision of residential outdoor education. What do you think about this measure?

We fully support the requirement for the Scottish Government to provide funding for the provision of residential outdoor education. Equity of access is a fundamental principle, and without government funding, the risk of creating a socio-economic divide in access to these valuable experiences is significant. By ensuring that funding is available, the Bill can guarantee that all young people, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to benefit from outdoor residential education. This funding is not just an investment in education but in the future wellbeing and success of Scotland's young people. We also believe this Bill would provide holistic benefits and support wider Government funding priorities that already exist outside of Education.

Moreover, research conducted by Outward Bound International (OBI) highlights the significant social return on investment (SROI) that such programmes can deliver. The global study across eight countries, including the UK, revealed that for every £1 invested in Outward Bound programmes, there is a return of between £5 and £15 in societal value. This value is derived from the positive and lasting impact that these programmes have on young people's lives, which extends well beyond the duration of the course itself. Although these figures are globally representative, they underscore the substantial long-term benefits that can be realised through investing in residential outdoor education. Therefore, the proposed funding is not only justified but essential for maximizing the potential of Scotland's youth and contributing to broader societal well-being.

Do you have any other comments?

The Outward Bound Trust believes that this Bill represents a significant step forward in embedding outdoor education as a vital component of the Scottish education system. We advocate for the inclusion of a robust quality framework to ensure that all residential outdoor education experiences deliver high standards and meaningful outcomes for all participants. Furthermore, aligning this initiative with Scotland's Learning for Sustainability (LfS) Action Plan 2023-2030 will support broader educational goals related to sustainability, climate awareness, and global citizenship. As an organization dedicated to outdoor learning, we are committed to working in partnership with the Scottish Government, local authorities, and other stakeholders to support the successful implementation of this initiative.

Submission from Scottish Outdoor Education Centres

Scottish Outdoor Education Centres (SOEC) is a well established provider of high quality Outdoor Education for Young People in Scotland. SOEC can trace its organisation back to 1939.

SOEC operate and run 3 large Outdoor Education Centres across Scotland's Central Belt. SOEC's primary role is the delivery of high quality, residential based, outdoor and environment education for school pupils and young people. Learning is linked and referenced to the Curriculum for Excellence's Experiences and Outcomes. SOEC's approach to facilitated learning will also develop young peoples' confidence, resilience and "positive mind-set" in addition to social constructs including team working behaviors and communication skills.

Do you agree that every local authority school pupil and pupils in grant-aided schools should have the opportunity to attend a course of residential outdoor education?

Agree, or partially agree

For many Young People, the "Primary 7 Outdoor Learning Residential" is a Rite of Passage. The immersive experience that this brings to participants has a profound impact on their learning and development and takes place at a key stage in their learning.

Beyond this age demographic, outdoor learning has much to add to a Young Person's learning and development profile. Outdoor Education is an excellent "leveler", whereby participants take part on a very equal basis. This is relevant to prior experiences as well as cultural or ethnic backgrounds. Outdoor Education provides a safe transfer of learning for social skills and work-based learning such as pro-social behaviors, team/ group working and communication skills. Key skills such as Numeracy and Literacy are evident by using pragmatic experiences such as maps, angles and forces. Environmental learning and conservation is a key learning objective on all outdoor education programmes.

The Bill does not stipulate what pupils should be entitled to this residential outdoor education as this will be set out in guidance, although the member's preference is that this should apply to all pupils between P6 and S4.

What are your thoughts on the stage at which pupils should be entitled to this residential outdoor education? Do you think this should be set in guidance or should it be on the face of the Bill?

I agree that the age range suggested in the Bill is the correct. P6 to S4 pupils. This should be set in guidance.

The Bill requires the Scottish Government to provide funding for the provision of residential outdoor education. What do you think about this measure?

Government should fund this provision. There are many Young People who cannot participate in this key developmental and learning opportunity due to the access of available funding.

The notion of equity and egalitarianism is central to Outdoor Learning. This is also a key value of Scottish Government. As such, the equity of learning provision should be afforded to the whole learning populace. Hence, Governmental funding should be given for this provision.