

SCHOOLS (RESIDENTIAL OUTDOOR EDUCATION) (SCOTLAND) BILL

POLICY MEMORANDUM

INTRODUCTION

1. As required under Rule 9.3.3A of the Parliament’s Standing Orders, this Policy Memorandum is published to accompany the Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill, introduced in the Scottish Parliament on 20 June 2024.

2. The following other accompanying documents are published separately:

- Explanatory Notes (SP Bill 50–EN);
- a Financial Memorandum (SP Bill 50–FM);
- a Delegated Powers Memorandum (SP Bill 50–DPM);
- statements on legislative competence made by the Presiding Officer and the Member in Charge of the Bill (SP Bill 50–LC).

3. This Policy Memorandum has been prepared by the Non-Government Bills Unit (NGBU) on behalf of Liz Smith MSP (the Member) to set out the Member’s policy behind the Bill. It does not form part of the Bill and has not been endorsed by the Parliament.

POLICY OBJECTIVES OF THE BILL

4. The Member considers that all pupils should have the opportunity to attend residential outdoor education during their school career. In the foreword to her consultation document on this Bill, the Member stated that:

“Outdoor education is one of the most valuable and rewarding learning experiences that any young person can have throughout their whole school career. In particular, residential outdoor education, when young people can be away for a week in an environment very far removed from their own, can be life-changing”.¹

5. For various reasons, primarily due to resources, many schools are not currently providing residential outdoor education for school pupils and the Member considers that there is a postcode lottery in respect of its provision.² Research by Dr Simon Beames and Dr Natalie Polack for the

¹ [liz-smith-consultation-document-final.pdf \(parliament.scot\)](https://www.parliament.scot/~/media/parliament/consultation/2024/06/liz-smith-consultation-document-final.pdf)

² [End the postcode lottery of residential outdoor education - Martin Davidson \(scotsman.com\)](https://www.scotsman.com/news/education/end-the-postcode-lottery-of-residential-outdoor-education-martin-davidson)

University of Edinburgh,³ which was published in 2019 (before the COVID-19 pandemic), stated that:

“A third of Secondary schools (33 per cent) offer a Residential experience to pupils, whilst only a quarter of Primary schools (24 per cent) and Special schools (25 per cent) offer this type of experience.”⁴

6. The level of provision of residential outdoor education has continued to decline and the Member considers that, to protect the continuation of this valuable opportunity for young people, it is necessary to legislate to ensure that it is a requirement that education authorities must offer residential outdoor education at least once in a pupil’s school career.

7. The Bill provides that a local authority must provide or secure the provision of one course of residential outdoor education for each pupil attending a public school under its management. The Bill makes the same provision for the managers of grant-aided schools in respect of pupils at their schools, and for pupils who attend independent schools with their fees paid for by local authorities (also referred to as education authorities).

8. The Bill provides for the Scottish Ministers to prepare and publish guidance to education authorities and the managers of grant-aided schools about their duties to provide or secure the provision of one course of residential outdoor education for each school pupil under their management. The Bill sets out what the guidance must include provision about.

9. The Bill also provides that the Scottish Ministers must pay education authorities and the managers of grant-aided schools sufficient amounts to enable them to carry out their duties to provide one course of residential outdoor education for each pupil.

10. It is the Member’s view that one course of residential outdoor education should be provided between P6 and S4. However, she wishes to allow flexibility for Education Scotland, local authorities and school leaders in making decisions on the age at which the opportunity should be afforded, so is leaving this to the guidance that is required under section 1 of the Bill, which adds an inserted section, 6B, in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (“the 1980 Act”).

POSITION OF THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL PARTIES

11. In its 2021-22 Programme for Government,⁵ the Scottish Government stated:

“we also want to encourage [children] to care about and for their natural environment. We will continue to promote and support outdoor learning.”

12. The Programme also made the commitment that:

³ [carnegie-report_web.pdf \(wordpress.com\)](#)

⁴ It should be noted however that the report’s authors caveat their findings by stating that a large number of schools do not publish an annual report, with only 32% of primary, 39% of secondary and 51% of special schools doing so.

⁵ [Chapter 2: Scotland as a Land of Opportunity - Programme for Government 2021 to 2022 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

“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.”

13. When he was Deputy First Minister in April 2021, the current First Minister, John Swinney MSP, stated that the Scottish National Party (SNP) would “exempt [low income] families from paying for school trips”.⁶ In November 2019, in relation to learning outdoors, Mr Swinney stated that:

“Learning outdoors has many benefits, from developing an appreciation for the natural world to problem solving, as well as improving the health and wellbeing of both pupils and teachers. Building in opportunities for outdoor learning into everyday school activity means young people from all backgrounds have the opportunities to engage, understand and help our natural world.”⁷

14. In respect of the views of political parties, the Member’s Final Proposal was supported by two SNP MSPs, 29 Scottish Conservative MSPs, three Scottish Labour MSPs and four Scottish Liberal Democrats MSPs. Furthermore, in April 2021, the Scottish Green Party education spokesperson, Ross Greer MSP, stated:

"As well as establishing a right for every child to experience at least one trip in each of primary and secondary school, the Greens would set up a fund to help families on lower income cover the myriad costs which come with week-long residential."8

15. The Member therefore considers that this Bill is entirely consistent with the commitment from the Scottish Government in the 2021-22 Programme for Government and, in light of previous support for the principle of residential outdoor education from MSPs from across the Parliament, the Member is hopeful that the Bill might attract cross-party support.

PROVISIONS OF THE BILL

16. The Bill provides that education authorities and managers of grant-aided schools must provide at least four nights and five days of residential outdoor education for each pupil within its management, and for funding to be provided by the Scottish Government to enable this to happen. It is the Member’s preference that the four nights and five days be taken as one continuous block over a school week, but, as such, she acknowledges that this might not always be possible. As such, the Bill provides that the four nights and five days of residential outdoor education may be aggregated over a pupil’s school career.

17. The Bill also provides that the Scottish Ministers must prepare and publish guidance for local authorities and managers of grant-aided schools about their duties to provide residential outdoor education under the Bill. Such guidance must include provision about:

⁶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-56736168>

⁷ [School pupils join call to help nature | NatureScot](#)

⁸ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-56736168>

- The nature and content of residential outdoor education;
- The standard to which residential outdoor education must be provided;
- How local authorities and the managers of grant-aided schools should assess whether residential outdoor education is suitable to a pupil’s age, ability, aptitude and any additional support needs;
- The costs it would be reasonable for local authorities and the managers of grant-aided schools to incur in providing or securing the provision of residential outdoor education;
- The voluntary nature of participation by pupils in residential outdoor education (to ensure that it is not compulsory for pupils to do it);
- The year groups of pupils within primary and secondary education to whom the residential outdoor education is to be provided;
- The manner in which local authorities and the managers of grant-aided schools should engage with school inspections in relation to the provision of this residential outdoor education; and
- The extent to which local authorities and managers of grant-aided schools should consider providing or securing the provision of residential outdoor education in Gaelic.

18. Furthermore, the Bill provides that the Scottish Ministers must pay local authorities and the managers of grant-aided schools such amounts as are sufficient to enable them to carry out those duties.

19. Finally, the Bill makes provision for local authorities to have regard to the extent to which a course of residential outdoor education would be provided to pupils at an independent school where those pupils attend independent schools on bursaries paid for by the local authority.

BACKGROUND

What is residential outdoor education?

20. Due to the range and variety of experiences available, it is difficult to provide a precise definition of the term “residential outdoor education”. However, in 2010, in its report, *Curriculum for Excellence for outdoor learners*, Learning and Teaching Scotland (the predecessor organisation to Education Scotland), stated that:

“residential experiences refer to educational visits where outdoor learning is the main focus of the experience and which include one or more overnight stays. Residential experiences include using outdoor centres or youth hostels, camping, bivouacking, snow-holing or sailing boats.”⁹

21. Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre sets out what outdoor education is generally considered to comprise:

⁹ [Curriculum for Excellence through outdoor learning \(education.gov.scot\)](https://www.education.gov.scot/curriculum-for-excellence-through-outdoor-learning)

“Outdoor education programmes usually involve residential or journey-based experiences in which students participate in a variety of adventurous, memorable challenges. The many positive benefits of experiencing community living in a residential environment should also be mentioned”.¹⁰

22. The Institute of Outdoor Learning, which is a UK-wide organisation that represents outdoor professionals, sought to define outdoor learning in the following way:

“Outdoor learning is an umbrella term for actively inclusive facilitated approaches that predominately use activities and experiences in the outdoors which lead to learning, increased health and wellbeing, and environmental awareness”.¹¹

23. The Bill sets out the key ingredients of this “one course of residential outdoor education” as follows:

- has outdoor learning as its main focus;
- includes at least four overnight stays and five days, which may be non-consecutive, in facilities such as (without limitation) outdoor centres, youth hostels, camp sites or sailing boats; and
- is suitable to the relevant pupil’s age, ability, aptitude and any additional support needs.

Historical context

The current law

24. There is currently no statutory obligation in Scotland for provision of residential outdoor education at any point in a young person’s school career.

25. Section 6 of the 1980 Act provides that (emphasis added) “local education authorities **may** establish, maintain and manage camps, outdoor centres, playing fields and swimming pools, and may organise expeditions and other activities”.¹²

26. The Member is concerned that, as there is no obligation in law to provide residential outdoor education, in a climate of very limited resources for local authorities and reduced service provision of outdoor education, there is a worrying and notable decline in outdoor education which the Member considers to be incredibly valuable formative experiences.¹³

¹⁰ [What is Outdoor Education? \(ardroy-oec.co.uk\)](http://ardroy-oec.co.uk)

¹¹ Institute of Outdoor Learning definition of “outdoor learning”. Source: Harvey, David (2022) Outdoor learning across the community: the development of progression and ecosystem models to enhance engagement. Doctoral thesis, University of Cumbria. Available at: [Harvey_OutdoorLearningAcross.pdf \(cumbria.ac.uk\)](http://Harvey_OutdoorLearningAcross.pdf (cumbria.ac.uk))

¹² [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (legislation.gov.uk))

¹³ [liz-smith-consultation-document-final.pdf \(parliament.scot\)](http://liz-smith-consultation-document-final.pdf (parliament.scot))

Residential outdoor education in the 20th and 21st centuries

27. Residential outdoor education has been a feature of the Scottish educational landscape since before the Second World War. Political and social change in the early part of the 20th century gave large parts of the population the means and freedom to access the countryside. Getting out into the “fresh air” was encouraged by government and the pursuit of leisure in the great outdoors was popular. At the same time, new charitable organisations aimed at the young were established to promote the outdoors, adventure, expeditions and camping, such as the Youth Hostel Association (1930), Outward Bound (1941), The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award (1956), as well as the Scouts in 1908 and Guides in 1910.¹⁴ From the 1960s onwards, influenced by the Education Scotland Acts of 1945 and 1980, local authorities established numerous outdoor education centres.¹⁵

28. In the 1980s, when the 1980 Act came into force, large numbers of secondary schools had a full-time outdoor education teacher, more than 100 outdoor centres could be found around Scotland and large numbers of pupils went, as matter of course, on residential visits.¹⁶ The 1980 Act, in section 1(3), placed every education authority under a duty to secure for pupils at schools in their area, the provision of adequate facilities for social, cultural and recreative activities and for physical education and training.¹⁷

29. Expansion peaked in the 1980s, and, by 1982, there were 123 centres, with approximately 5,718 beds.¹⁸ However, since the reorganisation of local government in 1996,¹⁹ which saw the abolition of the larger regional councils that were responsible for the provision of education, and the introduction of the current 32-council system, there has been a decline in the number of local authority-run centres. Philip Alan Simpson, in his doctoral thesis for the University of Stirling in March 2007, *Residential Outdoor Education in Scotland*, expressed the view that:²⁰

“Budgets of the new unitary authorities [...] were much smaller than the previous regional authorities from whom they took over education provision. Smaller budgets led to cost cutting, and a casualty of this was often the residential centre that was inherited from the regional council.”

30. By 2018,²¹ there were 64 centres offering 5,088 beds, and, on 8 September 2022, in response to an oral parliamentary question asked by the Member, the then Minister for Children and Young People (Clare Haughey MSP) stated that the latest data:

“indicates that there is a capacity of 4,400 operational beds in around 50 centres across Scotland. However, that does not cover the full capacity of the sector, and the bed capacity figure does not take into account seasonal availability.”²²

¹⁴ [liz-smith-consultation-document-final.pdf \(parliament.scot\)](#)

¹⁵ [liz-smith-consultation-document-final.pdf \(parliament.scot\)](#)

¹⁶ [liz-smith-consultation-document-final.pdf \(parliament.scot\)](#)

¹⁷ [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁸ [Dissertation.-Residential-outdoor-education-in-Scotland-3.pdf \(sapoe.org.uk\)](#)

¹⁹ [Local Government etc. \(Scotland\) Act 1994 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

²⁰ [Introduction \(stir.ac.uk\)](#)

²¹ [Dissertation.-Residential-outdoor-education-in-Scotland-3.pdf \(sapoe.org.uk\)](#)

²² [Meeting of the Parliament: 08/09/2022 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

31. The majority of the centres in place now are operated by the private sector or charitable/voluntary organisations, with very few local authorities operating their own outdoor education centres (these include Aberdeenshire Council (which operates the Sir Arthur Grant Outdoor Centre²³), the City of Edinburgh Council (which operates the Benmore centre in Dunoon and the Lagganlia centre in Kingussie), Glasgow City Council (which operates the Blairvadach centre in Helensburgh), North Ayrshire Council (which operates the Lochranza centre on Arran and the Field Studies Centre in Millport) and South Ayrshire Council (which operates Dolphin House in Maybole)).²⁴ The Member considers that the centres operated by the private sector and charitable/voluntary organisations now play a valuable role in ensuring the continued provision of residential outdoor education in Scotland.

Children’s and young people’s views

32. In respect of the view of children and young people themselves, the report, *Scotland Children’s Parliament Investigates: Learning for Sustainability September 2022*²⁵ included the following “calls to action” from the children and young people consulted as part of the process:

- All children should have the chance to learn outdoors throughout the school year.
- Children should be able to regularly learn about climate change and sustainability outside in nature.
- Being able to learn outdoors should not depend on where your school is based: every school in Scotland should have outdoor spaces to learn and play in.
- All children should have the opportunity to go to an annual outdoors school camp.
- Outdoor learning should be part of every school subject.
- Teachers should plan outdoor learning into all their subjects at the start of each term.

33. The Member was pleased to note item 4 on this list, namely that “All children should have the opportunity to go to an annual outdoors school camp” but is concerned that some Members of the Children’s Parliament felt that they do not get more outdoors learning during the school year (see Part 1 of the report).²⁶

34. The Member also considers the views of children and young people gathered during the Senedd’s consultation for the Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill,²⁷ introduced by Sam Rowlands MS,²⁸ to be relevant in the context of this Bill. As the Bill in Wales was not materially different to this Bill, the Member believes that these findings are relevant and might inform the Scottish Parliament of the strength of opinion among children and young people about the legislation. This was demonstrated as follows:

²³ [Sir Arthur Grant Residential and Outdoor Activity Centre - Live, Life Aberdeenshire \(livelifeberdeenshire.org.uk\)](https://www.livelifeberdeenshire.org.uk)

²⁴ [Contact directory for outdoor education centres](#)

²⁵ [Learning for Sustainability Childrens Parliament Report 2022 Small-1.pdf \(childrensparliament.org.uk\)](#)

²⁶ [Learning for Sustainability Childrens Parliament Report 2022 Small-1.pdf \(childrensparliament.org.uk\)](#)

²⁷ [Consultation display \(senedd.wales\)](#)

²⁸ [Residential Outdoor Education \(Wales\) Bill \(senedd.wales\)](#)

- 90% of respondents rated the importance of giving all children the chance to participate free of charge in overnight outdoor education, at some time, as seven or more out of 10. 42% rated its importance as 10 out of 10.
- Of respondents aged under 13, 89% rated the importance of giving all children the chance to participate free of charge in overnight outdoor education, at some time, as seven or more out of 10. 34% rated its importance as 10 out of 10.
- A large majority (75%) of respondents believe there should be legislation to ensure children can go on at least one free overnight outdoor education visit. 18% said “Maybe”, 7% said “No”.²⁹

Benefits of residential outdoor education

35. As set out below, the case for the benefits of residential outdoor education for young people is based on a wide and strong evidence base.

36. In 2010, the Learning and Teaching Scotland report, *Curriculum for Excellence for outdoor learners*, highlighted some of the benefits of residential outdoor education, noting that:

“Spending time away from the home environment gives children and young people opportunities to develop:

- confidence, by living more independently and making their own decisions,
- resilience, by having individual and group ownership for learning, community living and sharing free time,
- a sense of adventure, by exploring new places and new environments,
- an appreciation of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle through physical activity,
- a chance to reflect on experiences and learning.”³⁰

37. The Learning Away consortium, which is an organisation that works with 60 primary, secondary and special schools to demonstrate the positive impact that high-quality residential learning can have on children, young people and schools,³¹ set out the benefits of a residential experience in a table in its report, *Brilliant Residential and their impact on children, young people and schools* (set out below as “Table 1”). This makes the link between what the residential experience offers in practical terms and the short-, medium- and long-term benefits it brings.³²

38. This research study with schools across the United Kingdom was one of the largest and most extensive studies into residential outdoor education ever conducted. 11,000 survey responses were received from students at three time-points (pre-residential, post-residential and longer-term follow-up), 60 student focus groups and 40 staff focus groups were established, and more than 700 parents participated in the study.

²⁹ [Consultation display \(senedd.wales\)](#)

³⁰ [Curriculum for Excellence through outdoor learning \(education.gov.scot\)](#)

³¹ [Learning Away Summary Brilliant Residential and their impact Feb 2017.pdf \(learningaway.org.uk\)](#)

³² [Learning Away Summary Brilliant Residential and their impact Feb 2017.pdf \(learningaway.org.uk\)](#)

Table 1³³

<i>Residentials bring:</i>	<i>Which in the short- and medium-term lead to:</i>	<i>Which in the longer-term lead to:</i>
<p>The overnight stay and an intensity of experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended time away from home • A new environment and routines • Fewer distractions • Opportunities to work intensively and be immersed in learning • A collaborative community environment • Unstructured time <p>A new context for relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to break down existing barriers, hierarchies and power relationships • Students and teachers work more collaboratively in unfamiliar surroundings on unfamiliar tasks • The teacher is not automatically the expert • Residentials are a leveller for students and staff • Opportunities to develop and practise key social skills <p>Different and varied opportunities to experience success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wide range of practical and physical challenges • Opportunities for everyone to be successful at something • Opportunities to overcome fears • Immediate opportunities to revisit and build on learning experiences <p>New ways of learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A safe space to explore new ways of teaching and learning • Focus on real-life activities and experiences • Increased levels of student responsibility 	<p>Enhanced relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students and staff trust each other • Students feel more able to ask staff for help • Students feel more comfortable with each other • Students are more able to empathise • The sense of community is sustained <p>Improved engagement and confidence in learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased motivation and engagement • Improved behaviour and attendance • Increased participation in lessons • More enjoyment of learning • Enhanced confidence, resilience and wellbeing • Increased ability to overcome challenges and try new activities <p>New and developing skills and understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New learning continues to develop, including skills in: independent learning; study and research; self-management; communication; team working and problem solving • Deeper and better understanding of specific subjects/topics • Developing vocabulary • Improving creativity • Meaningful opportunities to develop and practise leadership skills • Increased ability to apply learning and skills in new contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved achievement, progress and attainment • Improved knowledge, skills and understanding • Improved relationships • Improved engagement • Improved behaviour and attendance • More successful transition experiences (at all key stages) • Raised aspirations • Greater cohesion and a sense of belonging • Enhanced trajectories to work, sixth form, further and higher studies

³³ Taken from: [Learning Away Summary Brilliant Residentials and their impact Feb 2017.pdf](https://learningaway.org.uk) (learningaway.org.uk)

39. The Calderglen (East Kilbride) Learning Away partnership, which took part in this study, set out to use its residential programme to raise the aspirations of more students to go to universities, and for those universities to be beyond Glasgow. The results met their expectations:

- 61% of students who attended their Drama residential achieved higher than their predicted grade, compared to 21% who did not attend.
- Teachers reported the impact of residentials on achievement in school as: improved confidence and motivation, students having a better awareness of their strengths and weaknesses and knowing what to do to improve, increased progress in learning, a more collaborative approach to learning.
- Through a range of adventurous, subject-based and revision residentials, and leadership roles on both trips and in school, their university application rate rose and the geographic range of applications spread.³⁴

40. This impact on attainment, and particularly on children from disadvantaged backgrounds, has been duplicated in other settings and the Member considers this an important aspect of the Bill. An extensive five-year study of 11- to 14-year-olds from 849 schools, attending mixed curriculum-adventure residential courses with fieldwork providers across the UK revealed that students from socially deprived backgrounds benefitted from exposure to learning environments that promoted authentic practical inquiry; students' collaborative skills improved and interpersonal relationships were strengthened and taken back to school.³⁵

41. Further work on attainment by honorary research fellow in outdoor education at the University of Edinburgh, Dr Roger Scrutton (2019),³⁶ investigated the process of learning for school pupils on residential outdoor education courses. In that work, Dr Scrutton stated:

“The exceptional improvement in score for the experimental group relative to the control group [...] is consistent with research showing that residential courses wholly or partly dedicated to curriculum work deliver strong cognitive gain.”

42. Several studies have explored the longer-term benefits of residential experiences. Heather E. Prince (2020)³⁷ reviewed four studies and found long-term benefits such as increased self-confidence, independence, communication, teamwork, life skills, and awareness of nature beyond urban areas. These benefits collectively encouraged young people to engage more in outdoor activities, enriching their lives.

43. Another study, building on the long-term benefits and similar in duration to the Member's proposal, focused on five-day outdoor education visits. It found that participants mostly

³⁴ [Learning Away Summary Brilliant Residentials and their impact Feb 2017.pdf \(learningaway.org.uk\)](#)

³⁵ Amos, R., Reiss, M., (2012) The Benefits of Residential Fieldwork for School Science: Insights from a five-year initiative for inner-city students in the UK, International Journal of Science Education. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09500693.2011.585476>

³⁶ Scrutton, R. A. (2019). Investigating the process of learning for school pupils on residential outdoor education courses. Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education, 23, 39-56. Available at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s42322-019-00044-4>

³⁷ Prince, H. E. (2020) 'The lasting impacts of outdoor adventure residential experiences on young people', Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning, pp. 1–16. Available at: [Prince The lasting impact of outdoor adventure residential experiences.pdf \(cumbria.ac.uk\)](#)

remembered the activities, time with friends, and being away from home. They reported various benefits from their learning experience, including impacts on their education and career choices, motivation for children to enjoy the outdoors, expanded horizons from adventures and travel, and a lasting boost in confidence and willingness to try new things (Brathay, 2018).³⁸

44. Residential outdoor education also has a beneficial impact on children and young people with disabilities. Crosbie (2014)³⁹ researched the specific case of the Calvert Trust, a provider of outdoor education for people with disabilities and found an increase in confidence, independence and realisation of personal ability were the key outcomes, resulting from challenge, teamwork and achievement.

45. The Bendrigg Trust (2022)⁴⁰ which also specialises in outdoor residential programmes for people with disabilities recorded increases in self-confidence, greater independence, improved physical and mental wellbeing, increased feelings of inclusion, and improved social skills for over 90% of their visitors.

46. In 2013 the Outward Bound Trust published a report⁴¹ on how accompanying school staff can benefit from residential:

“Professionally, the teachers reported benefiting from observing their pupils’ progress and achievements during the course, improving their relationships with their pupils and increasing their understanding of their pupils’ abilities. Some of them also reported that, as a result of working alongside our instructors, they had developed knowledge and skills that would help them to be more effective teachers.”

47. Active Outdoor Pursuits (an organisation, based in the Cairngorms National Park, which provides outdoor pursuits for all ages), has highlighted what it sees as the benefits of outdoor education for children, focussing on the way it empowers children and gives them independence, helping them to grow in confidence as they learn a number of formative skills:

“Outdoor education goes beyond exploration; it equips children with practical skills that are invaluable in life’s journey. It plays a pivotal role in nurturing a child’s self-confidence and independence, especially during residential experiences, which may mark their first significant separation from home and parental guidance. In this environment, children encounter opportunities to discover their capabilities, push their boundaries, and uncover untapped potential. They learn to trust their instincts, adapt to new situations, and, most significantly, develop unshakable confidence in their abilities. It’s an empowering journey that equips them with the self-assuredness to tackle life’s challenges head-on.”⁴²

³⁸ Brathay Trust (2018) Findings from Wigan Centres Alumni Survey, 2018. Available at: <https://learningaway.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Learning-Away-Comparative-Research-Report.pdf>

³⁹ Crosbie, J. (2014) Value of outdoor education for people with disabilities: an in-depth case study of the Calvert Trust. PhD thesis. University of Edinburgh. (PhD Thesis). Available at: <https://era.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/9443>

⁴⁰ [Freedom - Bendrigg Trust Impact Report 2021 \(simplebooklet.com\)](https://www.bendriggtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Freedom-Bendrigg-Trust-Impact-Report-2021-simplebooklet.com)

⁴¹ <https://www.outwardbound.org.uk/assets/pdf/uploads/Impact/benefits-to-teachers-paper.pdf>

⁴² [The Benefits of Residential Outdoor Education for Children in Scotland \(activeoutdoorpursuits.com\)](https://www.activeoutdoorpursuits.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/The-Benefits-of-Residential-Outdoor-Education-for-Children-in-Scotland.pdf)

48. In an article for the publication, *Education Business*, Andy Robinson, who is the Chief Executive of the Institute of Outdoor Learning and a member of UK Outdoors, also commented on the formative nature of the residential outdoor education experience:

“Every child’s first trip away from home is such an important and formative experience. A residential outdoor programme, or extended expedition, can go on to offer young people the chance to engage in adventurous activities in new and challenging environments far away from their local area, with unique opportunities for personal and social development. They are often amongst the most memorable experiences of a young person’s development and can lead to a lifetime of involvement in a new activity.”⁴³

49. Harmeny Education Trust, which offers outdoor education experiences within its grounds, highlighted the positive link between young people doing outdoor activities and learning about risk:

“Whether learning to ride a bike, kayaking on the local canal or exploring the woods, children will learn about risk, how to take risk with safety measures in place and learn to feel safe within these activities.”⁴⁴

50. Finally, Professor David Hopkins, Professor Emeritus at the Institute of Education and Executive Director of Adventure Learning Schools, explained the benefits of residential:

“Learning Away confirms, adds to and deepens the existing research base by its specific focus on the residential experience. Most important is its articulation of a ‘theory of change’ that explains how learning is enhanced through the residential experience. This proposition makes it abundantly clear that in education residentials are, almost without exception, the gift that keeps on giving.”⁴⁵

Resources

Cost of outdoor centres

51. The cost of sending pupils for a week’s residential outdoor education varies, including depending on time of year and nature of the visit. A selection of current year prices from the Abernethy outdoor centres, run by the Abernethy Trust,⁴⁶ the Lochranza Centre,⁴⁷ the Ardentinnny Centre,⁴⁸ Scout Adventures⁴⁹ and the Outward Bound Trust⁵⁰ demonstrate this variance. These are set out at Table 2, below:

⁴³ <https://educationbusinessuk.net/features/outdoor-education-post-covid-19-world>

⁴⁴ [Outdoor Education - Harmeny](#)

⁴⁵ <https://www.learningaway.org.uk/impact/evaluating-learning-away/>

⁴⁶ [Events \(venue360.me\)](#)

⁴⁷ [4a369c_1d40e97de18045498f56a8ae97b5514e.pdf \(lochranzacentre.co.uk\)](#)

⁴⁸ [Ardentinnny \(ardentinnnycentre.org.uk\)](#)

⁴⁹ [School packages 2024 \(scoutadventures.org.uk\)](#)

⁵⁰ [5 Day Adventure 13-15 years old \(outwardbound.org.uk\)](#)

Table 2

Venue	Price per pupil (from)
Abernethy Trust	£485
Lochranza Centre	£352
Ardentinny Centre	£200
Scout Adventures	£431
Outward Bound Trust	£575

52. There are a wide range of funding mechanisms currently in place and these can vary greatly on a school-by-school basis. Residential outdoor education can be funded by the third sector, for example through grants.⁵¹ Looked-after children may also be able to receive support from, for example, third sector organisations such as Who Cares? Scotland and others.⁵² Where central funding exists it mainly comes from education authorities. In more limited circumstances provision may come direct to schools through targeted funding such as Pupil Equity Funding (which is Scottish Government funding specifically designed to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, and reduce the poverty-related attainment gap). Funding is provided direct from the Scottish Government for grant-aided schools.⁵³

53. Where central funding is not available, many schools arrange fundraisers to help to contribute towards the cost of residential experiences. To a large and increasing extent funding is provided by parents or carers contributing towards fees and charges for, for example, instruction, activities, and catering. This can regularly involve parents, carers and guardians paying in full for their child’s residential outdoor education.⁵⁴

54. The Member is concerned that these costs falling on parents and carers prevents parents or carers in lower income brackets, including increasing numbers of people experiencing poverty, from being able to send their child on a course. The Scottish Government report, *Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2020-23*,⁵⁵ which was published in March 2024, estimates that, over the period of the report, some 24% of children in Scotland were living in relative poverty. The Member considers that this growing problem will only lead to an increase in the number of families that cannot fund residential outdoor education experiences.

55. In many areas, to avoid a lack of equity of access to residential experiences based on income of families, or due to wider resourcing issues and competing educational priorities, schools may have to decide that they are not in a position to run the residential outdoor education experience at all.

⁵¹ See for example: Youth Link Scotland - [Youth Work Funding | YouthLink Scotland](#)

⁵² [Support for Care Experience – Young Scot](#)

⁵³ [liz-smith-consultation-document-final.pdf \(parliament.scot\)](#)

⁵⁴ [liz-smith-consultation-document-final.pdf \(parliament.scot\)](#)

⁵⁵ <https://data.gov.scot/poverty/#children>

56. The Member considers that one course of residential outdoor education should be available to all school pupils, regardless of the ability of parents or carers to contribute. Therefore, the Bill places a duty on education authorities and managers of grant-aided schools to secure its provision, and a duty on the Scottish Ministers to ensure that education authorities and managers of grant-aided schools have sufficient funding to comply with their duty.

57. The Member considers that any system created ought to be based on substantial funding from the Scottish Government, but accepts that flexibility could potentially be retained to use different funding streams such as school fundraising activities and also to enable parents or carers, who can afford to, to make a part contribution towards the costs.

58. Further detail on the cost implications of the Bill is set out in the Financial Memorandum.

Impact of COVID-19

59. The Member is very concerned that COVID-19 lockdowns had a profound, and ongoing, impact on a generation of young people. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the provision of outdoor education in Scotland.

60. The Member acknowledges that the Scottish Government provided support towards the sector during this period, as evidenced in an answer from the then Minister for Children and Young People (Clare Haughey MSP) provided to a written parliamentary question in January 2022.⁵⁶ The Minister stated that the Scottish Government had provided £2.5 million in support to outdoor education, and ensured that COVID-19 guidance provided clear advice on safe, supported outdoor learning experiences and visits to centres.

61. While acknowledging that the recovery of education had been tentative, recent research conducted in 2022 by NatureScot⁵⁷ on the provision of outdoor learning in primary schools, shows a worrying decline. The report states that the educational landscape in Scotland continues to face many challenges:

“Primary Schools’ outdoor provision has decreased compared to 2014 [...] In 2014, the duration ‘per pupil per week’ was 30 minutes. In 2022, this was 7 minutes [...] the findings lead us to a possible conclusion that outdoor learning in primary schools has been in a slow decline over the eight-year period since 2014”.

62. A research article written in March 2021 by Professors John J Reilly of the University of Strathclyde and Mark S Tremblay of the University of Ottawa found that:

“Our latest research suggests that during lockdown most children spent less time outdoors, became less physically active and spent more time in front of screens. As a result, this may now be the least fit generation of children in history... Our behaviours are formed and reinforced by habit. Some children may have lost the habit of playing outside over the past

⁵⁶ [Written question and answer: S6W-05375 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

⁵⁷ [NatureScot Research Report 1313 - Teaching, learning and play in the outdoors: a survey of provision in Scotland in 2022 | NatureScot](#)

year, replacing it with sedentary screen time, while others might not have had the opportunity to develop the habit at all.”⁵⁸

63. Furthermore, in a report on young people and COVID-19, the Outward Bound Trust commented that “Children and young people across the UK have had their lives turned upside down by the COVID-19 pandemic” and noted that:

“Young people are spending more time indoors and are less likely to be physically active, reducing the opportunity for them to benefit from the positive correlation between physical health and mental wellbeing”.⁵⁹

64. The Trust also argued that:

“By its very nature, operating in natural environments outside, outdoor education is a means of both positively affecting wellbeing and attainment”.⁶⁰

65. This is a statement with which the Member wholeheartedly agrees. Given the well-established link between education in the outdoors and positive wellbeing and attainment, the Member believes that it is imperative that all children and young people should have the opportunity to experience residential outdoor education given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and of lockdowns on children and young people.

APPLICATION OF THE BILL TO DIFFERENT TYPES OF SCHOOL PUPILS

Pupils in local authority schools

66. The Bill provides that all pupils in local authority-run schools will have the opportunity for at least four nights and five days residential outdoor education in their school career.

Grant-aided schools

67. Similarly, the Bill provides that all pupils in grant-aided schools will have the opportunity for at least four nights and five days residential outdoor education in their school career.

68. These are schools that are supported financially directly by the Scottish Government and follow the Curriculum for Excellence but are independent from local authorities.⁶¹

69. Presently, there are eight grant-aided in schools in Scotland, These consist of Jordanhill⁶² in Glasgow, whose pupils are in mainstream education, and seven that are designated as granted aided-special schools that support young people with additional support requirements. These seven are:

⁵⁸ [Rewild your kids: why playing outside should be a post-pandemic priority \(theconversation.com\)](https://theconversation.com/rewild-your-kids-why-playing-outside-should-be-a-post-pandemic-priority)

⁵⁹ [Free report: Young people and COVID-19 \(outwardbound.org.uk\)](https://outwardbound.org.uk/free-report-young-people-and-covid-19)

⁶⁰ [Free report: Young people and COVID-19 \(outwardbound.org.uk\)](https://outwardbound.org.uk/free-report-young-people-and-covid-19)

⁶¹ [Chapter 5: Glossary - School estate statistics 2020 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2020/05/Chapter_5_Glossary_-_School_estate_statistics_2020.pdf)

⁶² <https://www.jordanhill.glasgow.sch.uk/>

- Donaldson’s School⁶³ – for pupils who are deaf or have communication difficulties;
- Royal Blind School⁶⁴ – for pupils who are blind or visually-impaired;
- Harmeny Education Trust⁶⁵ – for pupils have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties;
- Craighalbert Centre⁶⁶ – for pupils who have motor impairments;
- East Park School⁶⁷ – for pupils who have additional support needs, including autism;
- Stanmore House⁶⁸ and Corseford⁶⁹ schools - both of which are for pupils who have severe and complex needs.

Independent schools

70. The Member understands that pupils at independent schools already receive residential outdoor education covered by school fees and/or funded by parents of children attending a school. Therefore, the Bill does not place any duties on independent schools to provide a course of residential outdoor education.

71. Section 2 of the Bill provides that education authorities must have regard to the provision of residential outdoor education by independent schools before placing a pupil in such a school (and covering their fees).

Home-schooled pupils and pupils in secure accommodation

72. It is not the Member’s policy intention to widen this proposal specifically to include young people who are home-schooled or who are held in secure accommodation. This would not prevent local authorities, should they wish to do so, from making the opportunity available to home schooled children.

73. In relation to children in secure accommodation, the Member recognises that there may be specific reasons why it may not be appropriate for some children in secure accommodation to receive four nights and five days of residential outdoor education. As such, the Bill does not make blanket provision in this area. It is worth noting that very few young people in secure accommodation will have been in secure accommodation throughout their school career, so will, it is hoped under this Bill, at some point in their school career have the opportunity to experience residential outdoor education provided through their school.⁷⁰

⁶³ <https://www.donaldsons.org.uk/>

⁶⁴ <https://sightscotland.org.uk/how-we-help/learning/the-royal-blind-school>

⁶⁵ [Home - Harmeny](#)

⁶⁶ [Craighalbert Centre | The Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments | Cumbernauld](#)

⁶⁷ [School - East Park - The website of East Park | For young people with additional support needs](#)

⁶⁸ [Stanmore House School, Lanark \(capability.scot\)](#)

⁶⁹ [Corseford School, Johnstone \(capability.scot\)](#)

⁷⁰ Information on the number of young people in secure care, and the places available, can be found on the Scottish Government’s website. Available at: [Secure care - Youth justice - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

QUALITY FRAMEWORKS AND LINKS TO EXISTING INSPECTION ARRANGEMENTS

74. The Member believes that local authorities, schools and parents must, when sending pupils away to residential outdoor education, have confidence that the place they are going to provides a high standard of outdoor education.

75. The Member considers that a framework should be established that will ensure that the quality of the education provision of outdoor centres used by the schools is of a high standard.

76. Section 1 of the Bill inserts a new section (section 6B) into the 1980 Act. This requires the Scottish Ministers to prepare and publish guidance to education authorities and the managers of grant-aided schools about their duties in respect of the provision of residential outdoor education. The Bill provides that such guidance must include provision about the standard to which residential outdoor education must be provided.

77. The Member considers that the development and operation to the standard provided for in the guidance under the Bill should be a matter for Education Scotland in partnership with others, such as local authorities and representatives of outdoor centres (for example, the Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres (AHOEC),⁷¹ which is a UK-wide membership organisation with regional chairs, including Scotland).

78. The Member believes that there must be a clear curriculum-relevant educational element provided through residential outdoor education and that it should fit in with existing educational frameworks, such as *Getting it Right for Every Child*,⁷² *Target 2030: A Movement for People, Planet and Prosperity - Scotland's Learning for Sustainability Action Plan 2023-2030*⁷³ and the Curriculum for Excellence.⁷⁴ Compliance with this standard should be assessed and inspected in the same way as other aspects of the curriculum.

79. The Member considers that residential outdoor education can complement the goals of Scotland's Learning for Sustainability: Action Plan 2023 to 2030. Within the context of an educational inspection framework, this could be achieved by complementing classroom-based theoretical learning with practical experiences across Scotland diverse landscapes. It might also improve young people's understanding of themselves, the world around them, their wellbeing and skills for life and work. The member also considers this opportunity, available to young people of all social backgrounds, as a key aspect of her Bill, enabling them to broaden their horizons beyond their local surroundings.

80. The Member further believes that the emphasis on progression, a pivotal component of effective residential outdoor education, aligns with Professor Louise Hayward's Report, *It's Our Future: Report of the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment*.⁷⁵ This alignment

⁷¹ <https://ahoec.org/>

⁷² <https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/>

⁷³ <https://education.gov.scot/resources/a-summary-of-learning-for-sustainability-resources/>

⁷⁴ [Curriculum for Excellence | Education Scotland](#)

⁷⁵ [Supporting documents - It's Our Future - Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment: report - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

could provide schools, community learning and development, and the broader education sector with opportunities to collaborate with the outdoor sector on Personal Pathways and Project Learning. The member considers that the two areas, noted below, which are part of the proposed new Scottish Diploma of Achievement, might be integrated into a future inspection framework:

- Project Learning
 - Interdisciplinary Learning
- Personal Pathway
 - Opportunities for Personal Achievement
 - Ethos and Life of the School as a Community.⁷⁶

81. There are a number of existing frameworks and documents that provide guidance for teachers and other practitioners on how to offer effective outdoor learning which could provide a valuable basis for the drafting of elements of the guidance provided for in the Bill.

82. Guidance published by Education Scotland, *Outdoor Learning – Practical guidance, ideas and support for teachers and practitioners*,⁷⁷ provides advice and support for teachers and youth workers on working with children and young people in the outdoors and engaging with them in learning in this environment. Section 3 of this document states:

“The challenge for practitioners is to ensure that outdoor learning is embedded in the curriculum so that it becomes a reality for all children and young people. It is the responsibility of all staff. This means that every teacher and educator needs to plan and integrate outdoor learning as part of a range of learning and teaching approaches within interdisciplinary projects as well as within and across all curriculum areas”.

83. Section 6 of this guidance covers outdoor residential experiences. In choosing a residential experience, the document advises teachers to:

“look at the activities offered and find out whether or not there is flexibility in the way in which these are facilitated to enable specific and agreed learning intentions to be met. It is essential that teachers and practitioners are involved in setting learning intentions as part of the planning process and that they actively assess the learning taking place during the residential”.

84. This section also gives specific guidance to teachers on choosing a residential experience for their pupils, noting a number of matters to consider such as joint planning with the outdoor centre, range of activities, how it is evaluated, how evidence of learning, achievement and personal development is to be gathered, how the experience takes account of the design principles of Curriculum for Excellence, and the ethos of the centre.

85. In terms of the general school inspection framework, the Education Scotland document, *How Good is our School?*,⁷⁸ sets out what schools can expect from inspections. In February 2022,

⁷⁶ [future-report-independent-review-qualifications-assessment.pdf \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

⁷⁷ [Outdoor Learning \(education.gov.scot\)](#)

⁷⁸ [How good is our school? \(4th edition\) \(education.gov.scot\)](#)

Education Scotland published the report, *Successful approaches to learning outdoors*.⁷⁹ To inform this report, HM Inspectors of Education visited a number of school environments to assess the levels of outdoor learning and to identify examples of good practice. The report highlighted six components of practice, which when taken together, create conditions where learners can experience high quality outdoor learning. These were: leadership; supporting the delivery of the curriculum; children’s and young people’s experiences; wellbeing; partnerships; and professional learning.

86. The above paragraphs show that there is a significant amount of guidance for schools on outdoor residential education. However, there is currently no specific guidance framework where schools are specifically assessed on ensuring the provision of residential outdoor education. As the Bill provides for the required standard to be set out in guidance, the Member considers that Education Scotland and other relevant decision makers must consider how the new guidance provided for under the Bill, and the standard it sets, fits alongside and reflects existing guidance and inspection frameworks in respect of outdoor learning.

87. In terms of existing quality frameworks for outdoor centres, AHOEC has produced a “Gold Standard Accreditation”.⁸⁰ The accreditation assesses outdoor centres based on the following nine criteria, using a 1-to-5 evaluation criteria matrix (where 5 = Outstanding and 1 = Poor): Compliance with AHOEC Code of Conduct; Learning and Development; Customer Care; Safety Management; Facilities; Leadership and Management; Environmental Sustainability; Compliance and Insurance; and Continuous Improvement.

88. Outdoor centres pay a fee to be part of the regime, and the inspection process takes place every two years by an AHOEC-appointed inspector with experience in the field. Should there be a change in circumstances (such as a change in centre manager or ownership, or a significant increase in capacity) then an ad hoc inspection may take place. They are carried out by inspectors who are chosen based on them having wide experience. The inspectors will normally have a teaching qualification.

89. Should the provisions of the Bill be commenced, the Member would expect that the Scottish Ministers, Education Scotland, AHOEC (and/or other bodies representing outdoor education centres), education authorities and representatives of school leaders, teaching unions and parents would work together to consider how quality frameworks for outdoor education centres can be further developed so as to sit alongside the statutory guidance.

SIMILAR PROPOSALS ELSEWHERE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

90. In the last year, broadly similar proposals for widening young people’s opportunity to access outdoor residential educational experiences were introduced at the Senedd and the UK Parliament. This is in recognition of similar concerns across the UK in relation to the declining provision of outdoor residential experiences and the profound impact of the loss of these experiences on the health and wellbeing of children and young people.

⁷⁹ [Successful approaches to learning outdoors \(education.gov.scot\)](https://www.education.gov.scot/~/media/2019/03/Successful-approaches-to-learning-outdoors.pdf)

⁸⁰ <https://ahoec.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Gold-Standard-overview-Mar-2019.pdf>

91. In Wales, on 24 November 2023 Sam Rowlands MS⁸¹ formally introduced the Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill,⁸² which called on ministers to:

“take all reasonable steps to ensure that residential outdoor education is provided to registered pupils at maintained schools at least once before they cease being registered pupils at maintained schools”.

92. This Bill fell on 17 April 2024, following a motion to support its general principles not being agreed to by 26 votes to 25.⁸³

93. It should be noted that the resource required to implement the Bill was a key reason why it did not carry wider support. Resource implications are a key consideration that the Member has been keenly aware of throughout the policy development process and is repeated in detail in the Financial Memorandum.

94. On 20 June 2023, the Outdoor Education Bill⁸⁴ was introduced in the UK Parliament by Tim Farron MP⁸⁵ as a private members bill with the aim:

“that every child be offered at least one outdoor education experience during primary school years and at least one such experience during secondary school years”.

95. First reading of that Bill took place on 17 January 2024. The Bill fell on 30 May 2024 at the dissolution of that Parliament for the 2024 UK General Election.⁸⁶

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

96. There are a number of alternative approaches to this Bill, which can be broadly categorised under the following headings:

Maintain the status quo

97. One option would be not to legislate, and to leave the provision of residential outdoor education to the discretion of Education Scotland, local authorities and school leadership, as is the case currently. While recognising the benefits and success of the present residential outdoor education system in Scotland, the Member considers that simply maintaining the provision as it currently exists would not address the three core issues that underpin the policy underlying this Bill, namely that:

- many young children do not get the same opportunities as their peers for financial reasons,

⁸¹ <https://senedd.wales/people/sam-rowlands-ms/>

⁸² [draft-residential-outdoor-education-wales-bill.pdf \(senedd.wales\)](https://senedd.wales/draft-residential-outdoor-education-wales-bill.pdf)

⁸³ <https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/13873?lang=en-GB#A86889>

⁸⁴ [Outdoor Education Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)

⁸⁵ <https://members.parliament.uk/member/1591/contact>

⁸⁶ [Outdoor Education Bill Stages - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)

- 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, and
- 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.

Set a specific age range for pupils attending

98. The Member's initial policy intention was for the provision to be offered to pupils aged between 12 to 16. However, following consultation, the Member decided that this should be broadened, in particular to include primary schoolchildren in years P6 and P7. The Bill as introduced does not explicitly specify the school years in which the residential outdoor education should take place. The Member is of the view that this affords sufficient flexibility to allow local authorities and school leaders to decide when pupils and classes go on residential outdoor education. The Member considers that, in practical terms, it would be most appropriate for this to take place between P6 and S4. Leaving it until S5 risks pupils having left school before the opportunity is afforded to them. Furthermore, pupils in S5 and S6 tend to be focussed on exams. Providing the opportunity earlier than P6 raises potential issues in respect of the emotional or physical maturity of the pupils.

99. Ultimately, decisions on the optimal stage in their school development for a child to participate in residential outdoor education would be for local authorities and school leaders to decide. As such, inserted section 6B(4) makes provision for guidance to specify the ages or year groups of pupils within primary and secondary education to whom the residential outdoor education opportunity is to be provided.

Make the residential element optional

100. A further alternative approach would be to make the residential element of outdoor education optional. The Member recognises the value that regular access to non-residential outdoor education experiences, including, for example, activities on the school grounds, daytrips, forest walks and litter pick-ups can bring to young people.

101. However, the Member believes that, while these should continue to be encouraged, they are no substitute for the benefits of the residential experience, ideally enabling the experience to run over five days, and that removing this aspect from the Bill would severely weaken the overall value of the outdoor learning experience offered to pupils.

CONSULTATION

Draft Proposal

102. On 28 April 2022, the Member lodged a draft proposal for a Member's Bill to:

“ensure that young people have the opportunity to experience residential outdoor education”.⁸⁷

103. A consultation document⁸⁸ accompanied the draft proposal. The consultation ran from 28 April 2022 to 22 July 2022. The Member also produced Gaelic and BSL versions⁸⁹⁹⁰ of the consultation. A summary of the responses⁹¹ has been produced. There were 539 such responses. (64 from organisations). Of all respondents, 85% indicated that they were fully supportive of the proposal, and 10% indicated partial support. 4% recorded opposition (2% were fully opposed, and 2% were partially opposed).

104. Of those who were opposed, the reasons given included the level of resources available to give effect to it, the potential impact of the proposal on staff, staff time and the concomitant impact on face-to-face teaching, and the impact on other extra-curricular activities, such as music and language trips.

105. The consultation sought views on the proposition that the obligation to ensure that residential outdoor education is provided would fall on those who are responsible for arranging the provision, (i.e. education authorities and managers of grant-aided schools).

106. The Member noted that 82% of respondents were supportive of this, and, in her commentary, she stated that:

“I agree with many of the respondents that a coordinated effort, particularly at the local authority level, would be the best approach to implementing this legislation. Regional collaboration may also be necessary to ensure its effective and efficient implementation across the whole of Scotland.”⁹²

107. The Member’s initial intention was to limit the age range of pupils being offered the provision being limited to secondary school pupils aged 12 to 16, and that there must be a statutory obligation on local authorities to ensure that such provision was offered.

108. Although 53% of respondents to the consultation indicated full support for this range, the Member was satisfied that there was sufficient evidence pointing to the need to amend this approach to widen the range to include upper primary school pupils, and to remove the specific ages and replace this with age groups so that it should be made available to all pupils in eligible schools from P6 to S4 inclusive.

⁸⁷ [Proposed Schools Residential Outdoor Education Scotland Bill | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

⁸⁸ <https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/proposed-members-bills/liz-smith-consultation-document-final.pdf>

⁸⁹ <https://www.schoolsresidentialbill.org/gaelic>

⁹⁰ [BSL — Proposed New Bill \(schoolsresidentialbill.org\)](https://www.schoolsresidentialbill.org)

⁹¹ [https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/proposed-members-bills/residential-outdoor-education-consultation-responses-summary .pdf](https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/proposed-members-bills/residential-outdoor-education-consultation-responses-summary.pdf)

⁹² [liz-smith-consultation-document-final.pdf \(parliament.scot\)](https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/proposed-members-bills/liz-smith-consultation-document-final.pdf)

109. Issues were raised in some consultation responses regarding the provision of these courses to pupils in Gaelic-medium education (GME), most notably because of a lack of Gaelic-speaking instructors.

110. The Member considered three options to take forward these concerns:

- having on the face of the Bill a requirement that these pupils have the opportunity to have the outdoor education experience in Gaelic,
- the Bill requiring that outdoor education in Gaelic must be considered/ consulted upon as part of the Gaelic language statutory guidance or as part of the development of the quality framework proposed under the Bill, or
- providing for the creation of guidance within the Bill on this matter.

111. In adopting the third option, new section 6B(4)(h) of the 1980 Act provides that statutory guidance must include provision about the extent to which educational authorities and the managers of grant-aided schools should consider providing or securing the provision of residential outdoor education in Gaelic.

Final Proposal

112. Taking account of the consultation findings, on 24 January 2023 the Member lodged a Final Proposal on the terms of a Bill to:

“ensure that young people, in particular those in their first four years of secondary school, have the opportunity to experience residential outdoor education to an approved educational standard”.⁹³

113. Having gained sufficient cross-party support for the final proposal, the Member earned the right to introduce the Bill.

EFFECTS ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, HUMAN RIGHTS, ISLAND COMMUNITIES, LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ETC.

Equal opportunities

114. NGBU has carried out an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) for potential impacts of the proposed Bill on people who have a protected characteristic, as defined by the Equality Act 2010.⁹⁴ This will be sent to the lead committee to inform its Stage 1 scrutiny of the Bill.

115. The Bill’s provisions afford the opportunity to attend a residential course to all young people in both mainstream and grant-aided schools. For many pupils, particularly those with additional support needs, particular tailored accommodations will be required. This could, for example, include particular equipment, transportation or staffing assistance.

⁹³ [Proposed Schools Residential Outdoor Education Scotland Bill | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

⁹⁴ [Equality Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

116. The Member believes that this opportunity should be afforded to disabled pupils, including providing tailored support to enable children and young people to participate (for example, some young people may have to be accompanied by a carer). Throughout the policy development process consideration has been given as to how this fits with existing legal obligations, including the Equality Act 2010 and in line with Scottish Government guidance which states that:

“It is important to ensure that no one is denied opportunities through discrimination, prejudice or exclusion because of factors such as race, gender or disability. Every effort should be made to spot and overcome barriers to participation as early as possible. These barriers will be different for different groups of individuals but could include, for example, communication difficulties, physical disabilities, financial limitations or religious/cultural issues. Planning may require dialogue with individual participants, stakeholders and agencies or the need to seek advice from those specialising in supporting equalities groups to ensure that all learners can access the curriculum.”⁹⁵

117. Although experiencing poverty and deprivation is not a protected characteristic, the Member believes that the provisions in the Bill will be of benefit to young people in such circumstances who would not otherwise have the opportunity to access residential outdoor education on account of the cost.

118. The specific challenges of providing meaningful residential outdoor education experiences for the cohorts of children and young people set out in this section, and the section below on island communities, will require close consideration in the Bill’s implementation.

Human rights

119. The Member believes that the proposal will help Scotland in fulfilling its obligations set out in Articles 28 and 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child⁹⁶ (which are incorporated in Scotland in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024).⁹⁷ These focus on a child’s right to an education and on the quality and content of this education.

120. In particular, Article 28(1)(b) says that nations should “encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need”. In addition, Article 29(1)(a) calls for the education provided to be directed to “the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential”, and 29(1)(e) further calls for “the development of respect for the natural environment”.

⁹⁵ [Curriculum for Excellence through outdoor learning \(education.gov.scot\)](https://www.education.gov.scot/curriculum-for-excellence-through-outdoor-learning)

⁹⁶ [Layout 1 \(unicef.org.uk\)](https://www.unicef.org/uk/layout-1)

⁹⁷ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2024/13/contents/made>

Island communities

121. *The National Plan for Scotland's Islands*, which the Scottish Government published in December 2019, notes that:

“secondary schools on islands should be equipped and geared to prepare island-based pupils in the same way as on the mainland. Island students need to be put on an equal footing with their mainland and urban counterparts.”⁹⁸

122. For pupils who attend school in very remote and island communities, the complexity of the logistics of providing experiences might be more pronounced than for those in more populated areas or closer to outdoor education centres. For example, where any experience includes multiple modes of transport in one journey and long travel times to and from outdoor learning experiences on the mainland.

Local government

123. Section 1 of the Bill inserts a new section (section 6C) into the 1980 Act to require the Scottish Ministers to pay education authorities and managers of grant-aided schools “such amounts as are sufficient to enable them to carry out their duties under section 6A of this Act” (the duty being the provision of one course of residential outdoor education to each pupil). These estimated costs are covered in detail by the Financial Memorandum accompanying this Bill.

124. In terms of additional planning required in schools where residential outdoor education is not currently provided, a number of additional processes will be required, for example, the timing of residential outdoor education and how this might impact on school timetables and school staff availability.

Sustainable development

125. In the consultation paper,⁹⁹ the Member commented that the proposal will help promote and improve sustainability by:

- Bringing a greater appreciation and understanding of the outdoors and the environment in general among young people, including from urban and less affluent backgrounds.
- Developing pro-environmental values and a stronger connection to the natural world.
- Improving the health and wellbeing of participants, and future generations, developing their self-confidence, self-esteem, communication, critical thinking and problem-solving skills and raising attainment.

126. Education Scotland has noted that:

“Frequent and regular outdoor learning encourages children and young people to engage with the natural and built heritage. Scotland’s countryside and urban areas provide ideal settings for children and young people to understand the global significance of

⁹⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-plan-scotlands-islands/pages/15/>

⁹⁹ [liz-smith-consultation-document-final.pdf](https://www.parliament.scot/~/media/2019/12/liz-smith-consultation-document-final.pdf) (parliament.scot)

sustainability issues and inform personal decisions that contribute towards a greener Scotland.”¹⁰⁰

127. The Outdoor Education Advisers’ Panel, which provides guidance advice and training related to outdoor learning and educational visits in England and Wales, has observed that:

“outdoor learning and educational visits are vital for helping learners to understand the causes and effects of climate change and biodiversity loss, and to motivate them to take action to mitigate these.”¹⁰¹

128. Therefore, the Member considers that, by helping to develop and foster young peoples’ appreciation for the outdoor environment, the Bill will have a positive impact on sustainable development in both the shorter- and longer-terms.

¹⁰⁰ [Curriculum for Excellence through outdoor learning \(education.gov.scot\)](https://www.education.gov.scot/curriculum-for-excellence-through-outdoor-learning)

¹⁰¹ [The environmental benefits of outdoor learning | \(oepng.info\)](https://www.oepng.info/)

This document relates to the Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill (SP Bill 50) as introduced in the Scottish Parliament on 20 June 2024

SCHOOLS (RESIDENTIAL OUTDOOR EDUCATION) (SCOTLAND) BILL

POLICY MEMORANDUM

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