

Education, Children and Young People Committee

Wednesday 6 November 2024
28th 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 first evidence session on the Bill and the Committee will take 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
 - Dr Roger Scrutton (FRSE, FHEA) Honorary Research Fellow in Outdoor Education, University of Edinburgh

Background

4. SPICe has produced a background briefing on the Bill [which is published on the website](#).

Evidence

Call for views

5. The Committee issued a call for views on the provisions of the Bill which ran from 3 July until 4 September 2024 and 271 responses were received.
6. The [responses to the call for views have now been published](#). A summary of the responses received is included at **Annexe A**.

Written evidence

7. The following witnesses have provided written evidence which is attached at **Annexe B**—

- Emeritus Professor Chris Loynes
- Professor Greg Mannion
- Dr Roger Scrutton

Scottish Government position

8. 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.”

Next steps

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

**Committee Clerks
November 2024**

Annexe A



Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill - Summary of submissions

Introduction

This paper summarises the submissions the Education, Children and Young People Committee received in response to its call for views on the Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill. The call for views was opened on 3 July 2024 and closed on 4 September 2024.

The Committee asked the following questions on 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?
- 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 Bill requires the Scottish Government to provide funding for the provision of residential outdoor education. What do you think about this measure?
- Do you have any other comments?

The Committee received 271 responses [which have been published](#). Of these around 25% were on behalf of organisations and around 75% from people responding as individuals.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the themes of the responses to support the Education, Children and Young People Committee in its consideration of the Bill at Stage 1.

The first section of this paper provides the results of a closed question on the aims of the Bill. This is the only section where quantitative analysis is provided. The remainder of the paper focuses on the issues raised by respondents. It follows the structure of the questions listed above.

Quantitative analysis

All of the substantive questions invited responses in text boxes. In addition, respondents were invited to indicate whether they supported the intention of the bill under the first question, "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?". Respondents had two options:

- Agree or partially agree
- Disagree

260 respondents checked one of the options. 245 (94% of respondents that answered) checked “Agree or partially agree” and 15 (6%) checked “Disagree”.

67 respondents described their response as being from an organisation in the call for views. Of these, 60 respondents checked one of the options. Two selected “Disagree”.

202 respondents described their response as from themselves as an individual. Of these 200 checked one of the options. 13 selected “Disagree” (7%) and 187 (94%) selected “Agree or partially agree”.

The form of the question does not allow us to differentiate between fulsome and partial support for every local authority school pupil and pupils in grant-aided schools to have the opportunity to attend a course of residential outdoor education. Nevertheless, the results show broad support for the aim of the legislation among those that responded to the Committee’s call for views.

Responders to the call for views are a self-selected sample and may not be representative of the wider population. Members should exercise caution in interpreting these results.

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?

Benefits of residential outdoor education

Almost all respondents said that attending a course of residential outdoor education provides benefits to pupils.

Aberdeen City Council’s submission said that the expected benefits can include: confidence building; social skills; mental well-being; environmental awareness; connection with nature; risk-taking; resilience; adaptability; and learning by doing. Similarly East Renfrewshire Council said—

“We believe that outdoor education can be a valuable part of the curriculum and offer a hands-on, immersive learning experience that encourages independence, resilience, problem-solving, teamwork, and practical application of knowledge and skills. These experiences contribute to personal growth that supports not only academic achievement but also long-term success in various aspects of life. For residential outdoor education to be effective, it must be seamlessly integrated into the broader curriculum, with clear links to learning outcomes and assessment.”

Glencoe Outdoor Centre’s submission said that pupils attending its residential learn—

“Respect for & understanding of others & ability to bridge social differences; Improved communication & critical thinking skills; Knowledge of and respect for the environment; Tangible skills: e.g. learn to ride a bike; the value of teamwork & cooperation; and how beautiful Scotland is!”

The Institute for Outdoor Learning said—

“An increasing volume of research evidence supports the implementation of outdoor learning approaches, the quality of which has improved significantly since the publication of High Quality Outdoor Learning (2015). A summary of the evidence base supporting outdoor learning in the UK found that nearly all interventions had a positive effect. Evidence supports positive impact on

building social capital, fostering pride, belonging and community involvement, while a growing number of Social Return on Investment Studies (SROI) are showing a significant return on investment in relation to wellbeing and preventing poor mental and physical health, and positive learning outcomes.”

Frazer Howell from Scouts Scotland said—

“Outdoor education fosters resilience, teamwork, and leadership. It encourages young people to step out of their comfort zones, face challenges, and build confidence. These experiences are crucial for personal growth and can have a lasting positive impact on their lives.”

A teacher from a primary school reflected on their experience of taking pupils from inner city primary schools on residential outdoor education trips. They said—

“Many had never left their estate and the look of awe on their faces when in a woodland setting / on top of a hill/ in a canoe; their glee at climbing a tree or coming down a zip wire; their pure enjoyment of the food at every meal, all of these cannot be statistically measured but the benefits of the experience were clear to see. Those children would not have had these experiences if not for the residential experience offered.”

Another individual said—

“Outdoor education can be life changing. Having accompanied children for 3 decades, the positive mental health benefits, the active and healthy lifestyle approach, the team building, the care and wonder for the natural environment, the facing of and overcoming challenges being supported by friends and the ensuing confidence this brings are life changing. Education is more than a book. It should prepare children for life, teaching the values of respect and kindness.”

Another teacher described the benefits she saw from outdoor education residential to both herself and her class; she said—

“As a Primary 7 teacher who has been in P7 for 5 out of the last 7 years, I have attended 5 residential experiences with my different classes. I can wholeheartedly say that being away for 4 nights and 5 days has massive benefits on the children. They always come back from a residential just a little bit taller. It benefits their resilience as they don't give up on any of the challenge and push themselves further than they would ever do in the classroom. It increases their independence as they have to manage themselves with timings, routines and don't have people to do things for them and they all thrive from the increased independence and ownership they have. It improves their knowledge and understanding of nature and sustainability and they always come back enthusiastic to share their findings with their parents and school community. Outdoor learning provides opportunities to develop their problem-solving skills as they work in teams to complete challenges. The joy that these experiences give the children means so much for them and they are always smiling when participating in different activities. It really does teach them life skills too like making a bed, packing, resilience, communication, time management, nutrition, sustainability and problem solving. The thing that stands out most for me is that during their end of year assembly all of the children want to share the memories of Ardroy.”

Dr Roger Scrutton said—

“As a research fellow in outdoor education I specialise in evaluating the benefit of residential and other forms of outdoor education using quantitative methods. I can generate numbers, but I can say that there is not one pupil (well, maybe one or two who did not like being away from home) who does not remember their residential visit and can tell you how it has impacted positively on their life, either their development as a person or through their career, and this at a time when personal, transferable and interdisciplinary skills are essential in the job market and for a healthy society and economy.”

Existing provision

NASUWT 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.”

Local Authorities’ responses often highlighted the existing provision in their areas and how decisions around residential outdoor education are devolved to the individual schools. For example, East Renfrewshire’s submission stated—

“In East Renfrewshire, all of our schools already offer a wide range of outdoor education and residential experiences for children and young people. Our schools are empowered to decide the range of experiences offered and how these are organised, this includes types of residential outdoor trips, stage of those attending, staffing and costs. These are organised in line with our Education Department policies and approaches such as ‘Cost of the school day’.”

Similarly Inverclyde Council said—

“The sentiment behind this bill is welcomed and we agree that outdoor education can be a valuable part of a school’s curriculum. Schools in local authorities do 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.”

Manor Adventure Globebrow Ltd’s submission said that it found some local authorities procurement policies to be bureaucratic and that schools should have more autonomy to choose which outdoor centre to use. Lochranza Centre CiC reported that it had “heard numerous accounts from teachers who are so enthusiastic about bringing their students away on a trip only to be thwarted by numerous obstacles [for example the cost of cover].”

Fife Council said—

“Currently in Scotland, the availability of outdoor learning providers for schools is growing, but there are still challenges for schools in ensuring sufficient access

for all learners. While there are many organisations and initiatives that offer outdoor education, the demand often exceeds supply. If taking this Bill forward, there would need to be consideration given to sufficient provisions to be able to deliver the four nights and five days of residential outdoor education for all P6 – S4.”

An individual who had managed an outdoor centre said, “the demand for outdoor residential experiences are higher than it’s ever been, however the reality is that centres are closing, are having to reduce residential delivery due to staff cuts and costs, this can’t continue.” He said that there should be ringfenced money for Outdoor Education Centres.

Stirling Council reported that “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.” Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in Scotland said—

“Support is currently inconsistent across schools. Many schools are aware of challenging family finances and seek best value alongside lengthy notice periods, instalments and payment plans. They then draw on a mix of central funding, Pupil Equity Funding, fundraising proceeds, bursaries, trusts, provider discounts and more to cover or subsidise costs for families where they can. This diversity can mean that support varies between schools and across the country. It can also mean that, with the best will in the world, schools do not have the funds required to support all of the families who need it.”

EIS’ submission said—

“Currently, teachers play a key role in the organisation and planning of activities outwith school, including residential trips, and generally play a lead role in such activities in partnership with other school staff and parents. They also liaise with external agencies to create meaningful and joyful experiences which can be transformative for young people. It would be fair to say that such teacher-led out-of-school activities are part of school life in every school in Scotland, and are enthusiastically supported by the profession. However, it is important to highlight that teachers generally are employed specifically to teach their assigned classes the curriculum in their place of work. Whilst many teachers participate enthusiastically in excursions, including residential trips, they do so on a voluntary basis (that is, they opt-in and are not compelled to participate.) It should also be highlighted that many teachers who participate in excursions which take place in whole or in part outwith the school day, including overnight stays, usually do so without any financial remuneration or time in lieu.”

A headteacher told the Committee that it is “increasingly difficult to enlist the huge amount of goodwill and sacrifice needed from staff to accompany these visits [due to] family commitments or huge responsibilities being placed on them to manage increasingly challenging behaviour or pupil support needs.” He continued, “if staff are unable to support then it falls on already overstretched school leadership to make the sacrifices required”. Another teacher said—

“Annually in my school a growing % of learners opt out of the residential trip. Although heavily encouraged, funding sources identified, parents consulted with etc, this number is growing. We are now ending up providing a dual service so that those not going don't feel 'left out'. We appreciate that this is a construct of our own making. In some cases, it would not bother the families if we were

not providing day trips, however, in other cases, there is a growing expectation that we do. Again, staffing this is an issue. And there are costs and administration involved.”

Length of residential stay

Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre said that 5 day residentials are preferable. It said—

“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 ... 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.”

Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres (AHOEC) Scotland agreed and said—

“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.”

Professor Chris Loynes highlighted findings of the [Learning Away Initiative](#); he said that for primary school pupils residentials of 1 to 2 nights were most effective and that “more consecutive nights were no more impactful and could be disruptive for pupils and teachers.” Angus Council’s submission said—

“Three nights (leaving on a Tuesday) would allow schools to use the Monday to ensure that all preparation is in place and all school staff are available on the Monday to support any issues that have arisen over the weekend (for all of the children and young people in the school). Three nights is enough.”

The Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL) supported residentials to be delivered on consecutive days and that longer (ie 5 days) stays accrue more benefits. However the IOL said that whether the stays were consecutive days or not should be at the discretion of the local authority/school/learning community; it continued, “essentially the process should put the ‘pupil at the centre’ and the residential should be built around their needs.” East Renfrewshire consulted with pupils to inform its response to the Committee. Its submission said—

“Young people highlighted that delivering the experience over non-consecutive days could allow for greater accessibility, as it could reduce the need for extended time away from family or caregiving responsibilities. This is particularly relevant for pupils who may have additional support needs or whose families may be less able to accommodate a longer absence. They also highlighted that for younger pupils or those who may be anxious about being away from home, non-consecutive days could help ease them into this experience.”

Mount Cook Adventure Centre, which is based in the Peak District, reported that—

“Increasingly we find that 4 night residentials are becoming rarer and 2 night stays have become the norm. Great value still exists in a 2 night 3 day experience especially for primary aged children and arguably the opportunity of two separate trips has greater benefit. We would caution over single night stays

as much of the trip value is lost in travel logistics on arrival and departure and any disruption to plans can impact negatively on planned activities.”

PGL Travel Group’s submission said that the length of an individual stay at an outdoor centre can depend on the age of the group. It said, “it may well be that the younger age group would have a provision that was split as three 2d / 1n stays rather than one 5d / 4n stay to allow for the fact that they may not want to be away from home for a whole week at that age.” A pupil who responded to the Committee suggested that there should be several trips from P4-P7 with progressively longer visits. A primary teacher said that a range of options for lengths of stay could be beneficial and shorter stays can suit younger pupils, but she cautioned that “sometimes the location of the Outdoor Education Centres can prohibit this since it wouldn’t really be worth a long journey just for 2 nights”.

An individual argued for flexibility to take account of different schools’ ability to support a trip, for example due to the size of school or composite classes. Stirling Council said that flexibility of approaches is important; it said—

“There are varying approaches within our small local authority ranging from 5 day trips to 2 nights to local trips that are not residential to no provision. This allows for consideration of the cost of the school day, staffing, inclusion and ensuring that families and young people are considered in a dignified and respectful way. Some of this flexibility is required to ensure that all relevant children are able to participate, regardless of disability. Flexibility will continue to be required locally.”

Sport Scotland’s submission said—

“Changing the duration of the residential experience and requirement for overnight accommodation could reduce costs and still have the potential to deliver quality outdoor education. This could also provide an opportunity to limit the environmental impact of travel and associated costs if provision is local. However, we are fully aware that changing the duration of a residential experience and requirement for overnight stay could potentially diminish the experience and not achieve the intended value of the residential experience.”

The Donaldson Trust said that it would be important for neurodivergent young people to be able to leave an outdoor residential trip if they are “unable to participate or no longer feel able to fulfil the entirety of a planned stay”. Its submission continued—

“Though some of the young people we support may be able to participate in outdoor education (with the appropriate support) for four nights and five days, almost all will not be able to. Alternatively, outdoor education programmes could be developed in such a way that they are viable as ‘standalone’ days. This would give flexibility for all, since pupils who wish to participate in a more intensive, residential experience can undertake a series of ‘blocks’, whereas pupils less comfortable with this could participate in one block, i.e., a full day, without overnight. Young people wishing to experience some residential education might split their entitlement in two and repeat it at a later date, for instance.”

Potential challenges

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar’s submission said that it is concerned that making residential outdoor education statutory will remove the “goodwill voluntary element” from staff. CnES also said that trips are “are fully dependent on additional volunteers,

usually parents or adults from other sectors” and it was concerned that “the willingness of volunteers to undertake such duties will be lost, incurring further expense and logistical challenge on trip organisers.” EIS’ submission said “legislative compulsion would transform the contractual position of the class teacher” and that changes in teachers’ terms and conditions would need to be considered at the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT). EIS continued—

“Any effort to impose such changes through legislation rather than via the established negotiating forum would certainly be damaging to those industrial relations and the principles of fair work. Moreover, it is difficult to see how such a change could be achieved without appropriate remuneration.”

Local Authorities’ also raised concerns about how school staff would support a statutory duty. ADES (among others) said—

“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 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.”

Local authorities’ responses said that there are a few areas which require further consideration, which are paraphrased below—

- Composite classes
How would pupils not in the year group attending a trip be supported and cover provided.
- Timing of trips
Currently it is cheaper in the colder months in the year. How would demand be managed across the school year?
- Small rural schools
Small rural schools may have very few staff which may make the provision reliant on one individual. Similarly, there may be very few pupils of a particular year group and providing the experience to one or two pupils may be challenging.
- Pupils who do not wish to go
How would they be supported and if the pupil were to change their mind later in their school career, would the education authorities be under a duty to provide a residential outdoor education experience?

An individual respondent said that most of the challenges in providing residential outdoor education “are to do with the impact on learning and teaching and the reality of teaching staff having their own families who require their presence at home for various reasons.” EIS’s submission also highlighted a number of “risks” and “challenges” of the proposed legislation; these include—

“...teachers’ contractual duties; their current professional responsibilities in terms of delivery of the curriculum and of extant local and national priorities; the

practical implications of enactment on the work and life of a school, including staffing, resourcing and workload implications; and a realistic appraisal of current capacity in respect of appropriate residential outdoors facilities and equipment, and an accurate projection of the investment required to scale up to meet the ambition of the proposals.”

Some respondents (e.g. Argyle and Bute Council) questioned whether there are sufficient places in outdoor education centres to meet the intentions of the Bill, particularly at the times of year when schools may wish to undertake outdoor education. Scouts Scotland’s submission stated—

“Relatively few Scottish outdoor centres would have the capacity to host an entire secondary school year group. Scout Adventures Lochgoilhead is one such centre with around 150 beds but there are only two others we are aware of. The success of the Bill will allow organisations to invest in capacity, however it is important that it does not become a barrier to implementation at any Act’s inception.”

Bòrd na Gàidhlig along with other organisations with a particular interest in Gaelic said that the Bill should be clearer that for pupils in GME, residential outdoor education should also be delivered in Gaelic.

A number of local authorities highlighted concerns about how duties under the bill would be applied for pupils that move schools/local authority areas, or pupils that missed an outdoor residential experience due to ill health.

Pupils with additional support needs

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.”

The Family Fund said that it supports the intention of the Bill; it continued—

“Without sufficient and personalised planning and support taking place, many children and young people will be unable to access this entitlement or a personalised/ preferred alternative provision which delivers the desired outcomes for them. This in turn would further exclude and disadvantage pupils with significant additional support needs, potentially leading to stress and concern experienced due to a lack of good planning and support more generally, which families report experiencing in relation services.”

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”.

The Donaldson Trust said that to support neurodivergent pupils, staff and group leaders should receive specific training. It also listed a number of adjustments that may be required to support participation. These were:

- A wide range of both physical and non-physical activities being spread across a stay, designed in conjunction with participants beforehand.

- Clear communication prior to and during the stay, covering responsibilities and opportunities.
- Adaptive equipment, ensuring that young people with physical barriers to access are still able to participate in activities to the greatest possible extent.
- 1:1 support, where this is the arrangement the young person has during their 'regular' day.
- Breaks and flexible schedules to counter fatigue and/or sensory overloading.

An individual respondent was concerned about the school staff accompanying trips; she said, "the changing needs of students in schools is becoming increasingly challenging and the expectation of being responsible for students out of school with learning needs or behaviour problems should not be forced on staff who already do not have adequate training to deal with students such as this in classroom." Another

Quality Assurance

Currently anyone who provides, in return for payment, adventure activities to young people under 18 is required by law to hold a licence. The [licensing scheme](#) is administered by the Health and Safety Executive in its capacity as the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority.

A number of responses argued that the bill should be accompanied by a quality framework for residential outdoor education. An individual said—

"How we eventually evaluate the quality of experience, in my opinion, is critical to the whole proceedings. Funding poor, or low quality, experiences will not look good if millions are spent and little is returned (assessing residential experience outcomes is challenging). Creating and sustaining quality experiences is something that will require care and attention, to prevent organisations taking inappropriate advantage of the funding, and soft or low quality delivery."

The Institute for Outdoor Learning said—

"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."

Relation to other aspects of outdoor learning

Angus Council referenced [Target 2030](#) the Learning for Sustainability Action Plan. Which it said is “resulting in much more learning outdoors ... linked to local communities and increasingly involves involvement in place planning.” Angus Council suggested that “consideration should be given to simply ensuring that each local authority is funded sufficiently to have a specialist team to deliver outdoor education in the model most appropriate to our school communities.”

Inverclyde Council said that the definition of residential outdoor education is unclear. It said—

“There appears to be an assumption that this links to outward bound activities but there could be several different interpretations e.g. visiting Kew Gardens and staying in a hotel in London and other cultural trips. Would attendance at Duke of Edinburgh Awards count as nights away? Could pupils camp in their school grounds? In the Bill outward bound experiences appear to be viewed as having a higher priority than trips linked to arts and culture, social subjects and other areas of the curriculum.”

NatureScot’s submission said that guidance would need to clarify the experiences and outcomes from residential outdoor education. It also said—

“We would in part agree with the Bill’s claim that ‘significant benefits to children and young people from doing one week’s residential outdoor education during their school career.... include self-confidence, empowerment, independence, understanding of risk, awareness of healthy living and social skills.’ Residential experiences can have a very positive impact. However, NatureScot would counter that one week is not enough. Investment in regular outdoor learning experiences in nearby nature throughout children and young people’s school experiences is equally if not more valuable, cost effective, and arguably more sustainable.”

EIS’ submission said that it was concerned that “a legislative approach will result in a negative dynamic whereby time and resources are irresistibly directed towards fulfilling the statutory requirement to the neglect of other areas of outdoor education”. An outdoor learning specialist, Juliet Robertson said—

“With more flexibility than schools and local authorities could ensure that staff have access to training to better understand the concept of outdoor learning and how it needs to be embedded within the life, work of the school taking full account of the totality of Curriculum for Excellence. Otherwise there remains a risk that this huge investment becomes an outdoor white elephant and not really appropriate for the needs of all our children and young people.”

Learning Through Landscapes said, “the funding for a residential will lead to a reduction in funds and focus on the other, more regular forms of outdoor learning to pay for a residential.”. It also suggested—

“We should not assume [a residential outdoor education trip] is in an adventurous or rural setting for all. The opportunities may include cities, exchanges, cultural and technology learning. The 'outdoor' bit should be held lightly and interpretation allowed, rather than a narrow experience which we assume all children will benefit from.”

Sally York, formerly Education Policy Advisor at Scottish Forestry, told the Committee—

“There is a lack of learning outdoors in Scottish Schools as defined by the document 'Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning' 2010. ... Before addressing the lack of residential outdoor education as a country we need to address the fact that most of our children and young people have no idea what outdoor space they can walk to locally, they can use to play or that their local community would accept children outside playing. ... Outdoor learning is seen as optional, as a subject to 'do outdoor learning' and as something done by specialist who, for example, wears outdoor gear and takes children up mountains. It is not. It should be built into the school day so young people can experience learning and playing a more active way that encourages children to link their indoor learning to their outdoor learning and back again.”

Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education (SAPOE) said that “residential outdoor education experience occupies a unique and profound space” within wider outdoor learning a pupil should experience through their time at school.

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?

There were mixed views as to when outdoor education residential experiences should take place and whether the stage should be set out on the face of the Bill.

A common suggestion was that residential outdoor education is best placed at the end of primary to better support the transition to secondary school, where pupils are expected to have greater autonomy and responsibility. Brunstane Primary School (Edinburgh) said that its P7s often consider their outdoor education residential experience to be the highlight of their year; it argued that the Bill should specify that the residential take place in P7. Scottish Outdoor Education Centres' submission said—

“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.”

Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres (AHOEC) said that there should not be a nationally prescribed age range but that each local authority should develop its own approach provision to reflect its own context. AHOEC noted that the age range of pupils undertaking residential outdoor education may have implications for the provision available. It 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.”

Midlothian Council said, “each school has a unique context and Midlothian Council believe the school is best placed to decide on the year group that would benefit most.” An individual educator said—

“Guidance is always preferable to stipulating anything as it affords opportunity for tailoring experiences to specific contexts. Each school is located in its own community with its own specific set of needs. For example, a school in the East End of Glasgow with a profile of high SIMD 1&2 will have a very different context than a rural school in Argyll & Bute which could have a full school roll of 13 children. Head Teachers need to be able to assess the needs of their pupils and tailor learning experiences - like residential - to meet these needs.”

An outdoor learning specialist, Juliet Robertson said—

“At present no research exists that I am aware of that indicates at which age a residential is most beneficial. The type of residential, how it is put together, how it fits into the broader purposes of education, the needs of a child or group, and, of course, progression of residential experiences, all need to be considered. Also it seems sensible to take the perspective of children and young people into consideration too.”

SAPOE said that “there should not be a nationally prescribed age range”. SAPOE noted that this may create issues when pupils move between local authorities and/or schools; it said, “there is no simple solution to this and essentially local authorities must seek to mitigate these issues locally”.

Arete Outdoor Centre suggested that the bill should be aimed at secondary pupils. Comunn na Gàidhlig / Spòrs Gàidhlig’s submission said that provision should go further – it argued that residential outdoor education should take place on more than one occasion, eg “senior Primary; junior Secondary; and then senior Secondary”. It said, “pupils would benefit enormously from a series of such experiences in the likes of: personal independence and responsibilities; social skills; team building and team working; problem solving skills; environmental and geographical awareness; physical development and so on.”

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

Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre argued that spending on residential outdoor education is preventative and has the potential to save money in the long run. Scottish Adventure Activities Forum said—

“We see this funding as an investment in the young people of Scotland – it will help to build a resilient and innovative population with a greater awareness of how to protect our environment and look after their own wellbeing.”

The Outward Bound Trust’s submission said—

“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.”

Scouts Scotland’s submission said—

“Funding is essential to ensure the Bill’s success. Currently, many schools do not participate in residential, resulting in numerous young people missing out on the transformative benefits of residential outdoor learning. For Scotland to lead in supporting young people to develop essential life skills while new generations to its landscapes and environments, the opportunity must be equitable and accessible to all.”

EIS’ submission said that within the context of tight budgets for local authorities it is “concerned that without a significant transformation of the resourcing landscape, it will be harder to maintain current provision, let alone extend it in the way the Bill aspires.”

One teacher told the Committee—

“We used to pay all pupils to attend from our PEF budget but with cutbacks and increasing demands we can no longer afford to do this. Most of our pupils are in [SIMD] deciles 1&2 and cannot afford to pay themselves. Subsequently since COVID we have not been able to offer a residential trip to our pupils.”

Children 1st said that families may face a range of financial barriers to accessing residential outdoor educations, such as paying for “travel, clothes or equipment”. City of Edinburgh Council said—

“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.”

The submission from a group of carers organisations said that “consideration needs to be given to the additional financial support that may need to be made available to ensure young carers, and disabled children and young people, are able to have everything that they need to participate.” It also noted that the provision may need investment to ensure that it is accessible.

A number of local authorities criticised the estimates in the financial memorandum. 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.”

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar also highlighted that additional costs that could be faced by its schools which it argued was not properly considered in the Financial Memorandum . It said—

“The prime concern we have is the large additional cost we incur for ferries, buses and additional nights of accommodation due to the extra travel required. Costing for a trip for a class in our largest primary school calculated in August

2024 quoted £24,000. This is just one example and there is real concern that funding will not be sufficient.”

Connect’s submission said that there were concerns that funding may be redirected from other services, it said that “it is important that this does not impact on other services”.

The Association of Headteachers and Deputes 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 contribution to capital costs for the centres. It said—

“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.”

There were differing views as to the whether parental contribution should support residential outdoor education. Comunn na Gàidhlig / Spòrs Gàidhlig said that he 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.”. One individual suggested that funding should be provided on the basis of free school meal eligibility, another teacher/parent said “we would be more than happy to contribute some/all of the cost of a school trip/residential experience and would not feel hard done-by if other families were fully funded.” 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.”

There was support for the Scottish Government fully funding outdoor residential education, often on the grounds of equitable access. CPAG Scotland’s submission said that school trips can be valuable for young people on lower incomes, but “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”.

NASUWT said that the Bill, if enacted, could have an impact on the market of providers and affect the prices of residential outdoor education trips.

Annexe B

Written submission from Emeritus Professor Chris Loynes

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?

Yes. 'One residential is worth half term in school' (Tim Brighouse, Chief Education Officer, Birmingham).

Such anecdotal claims are longstanding and widespread. This belief has now been substantiated by a number of studies in the UK and elsewhere. A Swedish study found that a one night residential for their equivalent of P6 pupils embedded with subject knowledge achieved 4 times more knowledge acquisition and 10 times more knowledge retention than a control group. My own research has shown significant improvements in maths and literacy scores and exams for English pupils in their equivalent of P6 and S4 especially for low achievers.

Residentials are impactful. They offer intense, novel, immersive experiences in collaborative communities that involve unstructured time. The latter, especially the overnight stay, ensure deep learning occurs embedding the impacts in the life of the pupil, the teacher, the class and the school. It also has a significant impact on changes in relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers.

Residentials are holistic and multi-purposed. They can address any subject area, often several at once, at the same time as offering significant personal and social education that transfers to the classroom, school and family. The appended diagram summarises the findings of the [Learning Away Initiative](#) (LA) that studied 60 schools over five years involving 10,000 pupils and 1500 teachers. No matter the location, duration, age group or subject area residentials always achieved the outcomes outlined in the diagram.

However, the study also found that residential experiences are most effective when they are:

- Progressive throughout the time a young person is a student.
- Inclusive so that all students and their teachers participate.
- Integrated so that they are embedded in the curriculum and the life of the school.
- Include students and teachers in the design.

Residential outdoor centres are well suited to meeting the needs of older pupils for visits further away, managing larger year group sizes and offering specialist skills and knowledge such as adventure activities or field studies. Centres can also offer specialist provision to students with physical or learning difficulties ensuring inclusive experiences.

If so, what are your views on the Bill's proposal that this consists of four overnight stays and five days, not necessarily consecutive?

For primary school pupils LA found that residential of 1 to 2 nights were most effective. More consecutive nights were no more impactful and could be disruptive for pupils and teachers.

As stated above, a progression of residential experiences over the years works best. Students and staff learn how to learn in this way. Students can assume leadership roles with younger age groups. There are impacts on whole school culture. Calderglen High School, East Lothian (one of the LA school clusters) offered a residential to all pupils in S1 and then staff in S3 and above were encouraged to offer subject based residential. Impacts measured included lower bullying and exclusion rates, and higher levels of engagement in class and attainment in exams.

With this in mind, the nights on offer not necessarily being consecutive would be helpful facilitating schools to plan more than one trip. Schools can be resourceful in finding residential from low cost camping, huts, school swaps and training camps as well as residential centres. As such, it might be worth considering offering schools a budget rather than a specific number of nights away.

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?

Residential for older pupils can be harder to resource or manage with the size of year groups. In addition, one of the most effective timings for a residential is at the transition from primary to secondary school. As resources may be limited P6 to S4 seems an appropriate age band. However, if resources were available and schools had flexibility over the residential format and location then I would lower the age band to P4. I would like to see primary schools encouraged to organise low cost residential for pupils below P6. Funding for training and an advisory service to support this should be considered.

Do you think this should be set in guidance or should it be on the face of the Bill?

Placing this in the guidance allows for exceptions to be possible (e.g. small schools, all through schools) and for adjustments to be made as evaluation informs practice or resources change.

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

Funding will ensure inclusion. Data from England collected by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom suggests that a pupil will, on average, have two residential during their student life. However, this is unevenly distributed with those in highly urban and low income communities, which often coincide, getting the poorest provision. Funding would challenge this inequity either between schools or within a class.

Any other comments?

An effective introduction requires

- buy in from the school leadership team
- A whole school approach
- On the job support and training
- Schools operating in clusters of mutual support especially secondary schools linked to their feeder primary schools.

Why brilliant residentials?

Residentials bring:

- The overnight stay and an intensity of experience**
 - Extended time away from school
 - A new environment and routines
 - Fewer distractions
 - Opportunities to work intensively and be immersed in an environment
 - A collaborative community
- A new context for relationships**
 - Opportunities to break down existing barriers, hierarchies and power relationships
 - Opportunities to work more collaboratively in unfamiliar surroundings on unfamiliar tasks
 - The teacher is no expert
 - Residentials are a leveller for students and staff
 - Opportunities to develop and practise key social skills

So what is it about the residential that uniquely translates into short, medium and long-term outcomes for students?
This diagram sets out our theory about the changes that happen to learning through brilliant residential experiences.

Residentials bring:

- Different and varied opportunities to experience success**
 - A safe space to explore new ways of teaching and learning and experiences
 - Focus on real-life activities
 - Increased levels of student responsibility
- New ways of learning**
 - A safe space to explore new ways of teaching and learning and experiences
 - Focus on real-life activities
 - Increased levels of student responsibility
- Enhanced relationships**
 - Students and staff trust each other
 - Students are more able to ask staff for help
 - Students feel more comfortable with each other
 - Students are more able to empathise with each other
 - A sustained community
- Improved engagement and resilience in learning**
 - Increased motivation and engagement
 - Improved behaviour and attendance
 - Greater participation in lessons
 - More enjoyment of learning
 - Enhanced confidence, resilience and wellbeing
 - Increased ability to overcome challenges and try new activities
- New and developing skills and understanding**
 - Opportunities to develop, including learning, study and communication, team working and problem solving
 - Deeper and better understanding of specific subjects
 - Developing vocabulary
 - Improving creativity
 - Meaningful opportunities to develop and practise leadership skills
 - Opportunities to apply learning and skills in new contexts

Which in the short and medium term lead to:

- Improved achievement, progress and attainment
- Improved skills and understanding
- Improved relationships
- Improved engagement and attendance
- More successful transition (at all key stages)
- Raised aspirations
- Greater cohesion and a sense of belonging
- Enhanced trajectories to further and higher studies

Which in the longer term lead to:

- Improved achievement, progress and attainment
- Improved skills and understanding
- Improved relationships
- Improved engagement and attendance
- More successful transition (at all key stages)
- Raised aspirations
- Greater cohesion and a sense of belonging
- Enhanced trajectories to further and higher studies

LEARNING AWAY

Written submission from Professor Greg Mannion

The Bill will establish 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.

Questions

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?

Yes. But this yes needs to be understood as part of a wider *'yes' to more support for outdoor learning as part of Learning for Sustainability within Curriculum for Excellence.*

Outdoor residential education – especially that provided by 'centres' is a key part of the outdoor partnership approach to supporting schools in getting outdoors for teaching, learning and play. If the goal is to support these centres through the Bill, then of course we would want to support that; directly funding the centres seems to be one way to do that if they had targets for provision and schools could access these. Schools might rather have the funds for local provision and professional learning however.

If the goal is to encourage all kinds of residential– including self-directed and teacher led and events hosted in places other than adventure education centres – then a different approach would be needed for funding and the terms of the Bill would need some amendment.

If the target is to encourage all kinds of outdoor teaching learning and play, this is not the Bill we need.

Residential visits in research tend to be shown to encourage outcomes such as self-confidence, self-efficacy and other social skills. There is evidence these events can encourage leadership and communication competencies too. There are questions around why we might want to fund and focus on these kinds of outcomes specifically and focus on 'outdoor education' in its residential form the term outdoor learning is in policy circulation and has greater reach. I explain these concerns below.

'Outdoor Education' and 'Outdoor Learning'

Outdoor Education is used in the Bill title and less notice is taken of the policy term **'outdoor learning'**. Outdoor Learning is the Scottish term we would expect to be used for state funded curriculum-linked provision: see

<https://education.gov.scot/media/isxg4lb0/cfe-through-outdoor-learning.pdf>

The Bill, as framed, is squarely based on the presumption that *outdoor education* is focused on a residential kind of experience when in fact in Scotland since 2010, *outdoor learning* is the policy term used in Curriculum for Excellence.

Outdoor learning is the term used to capture all of the ways in which outdoor experiences can assist in the support for outcomes from the curriculum and includes residential provision. In our research, teachers' reports overwhelmingly indicate outdoor learning enhances engagement and active learning, and was seen to render lessons more enjoyable and relevant. Our survey shows greenspace use for outdoor learning meets the need to provide for a wide variety of subject areas and for Learning for Sustainability, and that there is also improved engagement compared to indoor lessons. The Bill could take this into account by using the policy term Outdoor learning as a key identifier. (It appears one I think).

The use of the term 'Outdoor education' and the focus on residential provision in this Bill privileges residential and implicitly a more adventurous form of learning to the potential neglect of the provision of teacher-led outdoor educational experience in local areas and nearby nature (for which funding is also required). There are risks here which include a link between the Bill's intention and the Kurt Hahnian version of 'outdoor education' with its main somewhat dated if not colonial and association with the development of tenacity and grit as key outcomes to the neglect of other equally important progressive and contemporary aims around human-environment sustainability and curricular-linked learning. I address some of these risks and issues below.

There are also obvious arguments around what kind of outdoor learning provision might help learners address their own and society's needs at a time of **Nature Emergency and in the context of the Climate Crisis**. Some marginal aspects of current residential centre provision provide experiential **learning in nature**, action competencies for **pro-environmental behaviour**, and **connection to place**. Yet, these goals can also – perhaps more easily – be achieved in school grounds and local areas, on school campuses and with conservation bodies in partnership, and through **connection to place**, heritage and community via repeat visits to local areas on foot. Local regular, teacher-led provision also enhances opportunities for 'before and after' **linking to the curriculum** (as teachers have more input).

Regular, local, outdoor learning has scope to promote mental and physical health in children and young people. Going outdoor regularly will achieve these aims more than a once off 5 day residential trip. Regular, curriculum-linked, school-delivered educational activities inclusive of natural environments are more likely to address both the issues of self-confidence, and leadership aims whilst also addressing pro-environmental behaviour, attainment and other curricular outcomes. We need to understand outdoor provision in the round.

Schools should play a role in enabling children and young people's contact with different outdoor natural and other kinds of environments. Residential centre provision and residential trips are *one kind* of outdoor experiential learning. Even within residential provision there is a range of possible approaches which the Bill takes some account of: camping and other teacher-led overnight trips. But the thrust of the Bill does not yet (though it might in Guidance) take account of trips that might address other outcomes such as music or arts, geography or history, or learning for sustainability.

Setting, Aims, and Outcomes

There is a likely expectation among teachers that the term 'outdoor education' is a centre-based activity and, by implication, adventure- and skills-focused and led by specialists.

Outdoor education programmes usually involve residential or journey-based experiences in which students participate in a variety of adventurous, memorable challenges. This common definition often used by centres comes with implicit aims and expected outcomes. The emphasis on adventure and outdoor journey skills is often presumed to be the *inputs* needed for personal development *outcomes* for learners such as self-confidence, social skills, resilience and character building. Some outdoor education centres' provision have some 'eco' programming, and say they look to develop relationships with nature; the John Muir award also helps centres achieve this – which may be important in the guidance. But many centres do not mention environmental issues or sustainability and focus on **social and personal learning almost completely** with images of activities such as gorge walking and high ropes work across their websites. Environmental science learning, activism for the environment, and sustainability learning for example, tends to be optional and much less valorised.

Beyond outdoor education centres, outdoor learning experience can be provided via *a mix of indoor and outdoor learning* and will encompassing **settings other than "outdoor centres, youth hostels, camps or sailing boats"** mentioned in the Bill. Importantly, we know from research that the preparation for learning outdoors (whilst indoors) and the review and extension of learning indoors after being outside, is known to be the most effective form of outdoor provision. This, local regular events led by teachers can meet this requirement well, as can the more enlightened centres.

The Bill may or may not want to broaden the church of location types and encourage outdoor learning that is different to the adventure skills-focussed 'beyond our comfort zone' approach. For example, could a school go to a setting and learn languages whilst also spending nights under canvas and doing cultural experiences? We would wonder if the Bill has the capacity to allow schools to address *green skills* through visits to farms or fisheries (where some outdoor learning would occur), whether a visit to an *urban centre* would also be encouraged, or whether a residential music education or history education trip could be included if some outdoor element was present? **Allowing scope for schools and teachers to decide where and how education that is connecting indoors and outdoors, working with a focus on single subjects and across subjects seems important to consider.** Depending on a schools' catchment and curricular orientation, **culturally-responsive and place-**

responsive outdoor provision could equally and viably include an inquiry visit to a city street, a recycling centre, a wind farm, or a national park.

Learning for Sustainability and Environmental Education

Outdoor education and outdoor learning can and is of course more than outdoor skills and personal development. A third focus needs to be on environmental education processes and outcomes. There is a national policy context here for this emphasis. In Scotland, Outdoor Learning sits alongside Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Education under the umbrella term '**Learning for Sustainability**'. Hence, it should be noted that residential outdoor provision should address sustainability in the Scottish policy context. Given the current situation around young people's concerns and levels of eco anxiety, the crisis in nature and the climate emergency, as well as the current revision of the curriculum and rejuvenation of the policies around Learning for Sustainability, we might expect the Bill at least in Guidance to forthrightly focus on sustainability outcomes for learners. But the relationship to the sustainable development goals, and how this experience might improve the relational outcomes between humans and the environment are in the main not addressed in the Bill or in residential centres programming.

Sustainability of the Residential Setting

In a residential outdoor educational provision, we would expect the Bill to seek to call on providers to show how the provision meets the needs of the contemporary school curriculum which includes outdoor learning as part of Learning for Sustainability. For example, the experiences might need to address this interdisciplinary learning goal; the residential campus setting may need to address environmental education goals, and address issues such as how food is sourced, how the location is heated, how young people travel to the location, how they impact the environment whilst there, and what actions they might take there to improve an environment via conservation action and so on. Only rarely do centres offer conservation action options to enhance the location. Similarly, for other subject areas, we could ensure residential experiences are meeting these outcomes if there was a mention of 'curriculum-linking' in the Bill. Linking with staff and pupils in planning ahead of residential stays in specialist centres and after these trips would seem important for curriculum relevance to be ensured.

Contemporary Relevance

Sitting the residential experience within the wider government agenda around sustainability, and in CfE as Learning for Sustainability, could improve how well it would be connected to wider on-going and regular activities back in schools and via other outdoor inputs in local areas. Doing this would bolster its chances of being effective, relevant and connected to where schools are predicted to be headed in the coming decade as we face the climate and nature crisis head on. Not doing this risks provision being less relevant, less effective, disconnected and honey-potted, only loosely linked to some aspects of the curriculum both spatially and in terms of its positioning of the overall goals.

Whilst some education residential centres strive to link to the curriculum, the ethos of the Bill sidesteps this curriculum-linking issue signposting that this ‘once off’ residential trip might indeed be an add-on to the core curriculum or even a recreational event at the end of the school year. Similarly, there is not yet a mention of how provision would be inspected as part of the educational provision of a state school.

If so, what are your views on the Bill’s proposal that this consists of four overnight stays and five days, not necessarily consecutive?

Time Outdoors

In our surveys, we know that the vast majority of outdoor learning is delivered at low or no cost by teachers in school grounds and local areas in ways that are connected to subjects and to the links between subjects (interdisciplinary learning). In 2022, 85% of surveyed primary school outdoor learning time (duration) was spent in school grounds (Mannion et al 2022). Funding schools to deliver on ‘Outdoor Education’ rather than improving outdoor learning provision seems almost counter the last 15 years of effort (since the publication of Cfe through Outdoor Learning in 2010) we have made across sectors to encourage teachers to do more of this kind of provision where funding for teachers’ education to go outdoor more has been lacking and has been identified as a gap for school education (see Mannion et al 2022). Whereas early years settings have shown an uplift in provision durations likely due to policy promotion and training for outdoor provision, school-based outdoor provision has declined dramatically since 2014. In Norway, a recent study showed that outdoor learning time there (also mostly delivered by teachers) could be some 25 times greater in duration, so we can securely suggest Scotland needs to address this issue with funding.

In this Bill, we should consider the impact on **duration**. Certainly, funding **one residential trip in a pupils’ ‘career’ will not noticeably impact their overall duration of outdoor learning**. Hence, at some cost to government, through this Bill we may not address the need for uplift in outdoor learning provision overall. In fact, this kind of approach in policy may implicitly tell (some) teachers that the residential trip is core outdoor provision and, through going to outdoor providers and residential centres, they may feel the need not any longer to be concerned with regular local provision in local greenspaces or local day long trips. In policy terms, this Bill is likely to do little to increase durations of provision and could be read as a policy that takes outdoor learning responsibility away from teachers, potentially reducing overall outdoor learning time further.

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?

Age Range

The Bill seems to presume we know at what age a residential trip might best benefit a child. We really have not got evidence for this. An example will indicate the issue here. We know of one primary independent school in Scotland that offers a min of 26 nights residential away from school in their primary 'career' between the ages of 5 and 13. In that school, children commence residential experience by going away under canvas on camp with their parents at 3-4 yrs of age in pre-school. From 4-10, they spend one night away camping each year in a local area. From 11-13 there is opportunity to be on *multiple* residential trips (2-6 nights) that are longer across multiple trips with various foci, sports, culture, etc. In that setting, the residential trips combine outdoor experiences as day trips such as Munro hiking, with residential and non-residential language learning, trips abroad, and other intergenerational events of a sporting and cultural nature. This school's exemplification challenges the notion that the Bill should prescribe the age range or that there is any optimum age for benefitting from outdoor-oriented residential visits. **More flexibility is suggested therefore.**

Do you think this should be set in guidance or should it be 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?

If the Bill says in the form it is written, the Guidance will become critical. Guidance may help this Bill to come to a place of relevance and meaningful delivery. It will need to address some key questions:

1. What is the purpose of residential and non-residential outdoor educational experience? Is it to support the Curriculum?
2. Why is the use of the term Outdoor Learning not taken up here? **How should residential provision link to Learning for Sustainability in the Scottish curriculum?** This seems necessary given the contemporary policy and socio-environmental context.
3. How is residential experiential learning valued in the ecology of wider provision and how this is to be supported? How might funding be used flexibly by schools and early years settings? How can funds be used to help teachers learn to be outdoor facilitators (perhaps whilst at centres)?
4. How does the incorporation of the UNCRC impact this Bill? An impact assessment will need to be conducted. Children's existing views on outdoor learning and sustainability taken into account as their right – [see **Children's Parliament (2022)** report]. Children are clear: they want to address climate and nature emergency issues and want regular outdoor learning
5. How can we help provide professional learning for teachers to enable them to provide more outdoor educational experience especially that which is related to Learning for Sustainability. Our research (Mannion et al 2022) showed that **an essential support for the expansion of outdoor provision will be the opportunity for teachers to engage in high quality professional learning.** Linking professional learning for outdoor provision and Learning for Sustainability will be necessary to increase teacher confidence and expertise in both areas.

6. In schools, we know from research (Mannion et al 2022) that there is a need to increase *all types of outdoor provision*: in school grounds, off-site, in local areas, and through day-long trips, and residential trips.
7. **Larger schools, schools in urban areas, and schools in areas of deprivation will need targeted support.**

Any other comments?

Overall, we see many positives, as well as flaws in the Bill that could be remedied by taking a wider view, and certainly through more explicit Guidance, through the use of different key policy terms, through addressing ecologically the need for systemic support for the schools, staff, communities and partner organisations that provide for outdoor learning, and through addressing residential outdoor education as more than a stand-alone entity. In the end, I expect many schools would rather have funds to provide outdoor learning resources that could substantially uplift provision duration for all pupils in school on a regular basis or funds to help teachers lead more outdoor provision.

At this time, taking a view of what young people need – we can consider their mental wellbeing, their physical activity levels, and the prevalence of ecoanxiety – as well as what eco-social problems we are facing – around green skills for work, and a citizenry ready to address sustainability issues, taking action for the environment – we find the Bill lacking in vision and scope. That said, in principle, any funding to support residential or non-residential outdoor provision would be welcome if these important issues are also addressed in the round. There are substantial risks with the instatement of the term outdoor education into the legal position Government is taking here positioning residential provision as a gold standard that is fundable whilst teachers seek support and in-service professional learning in order to meet the core needs of the curriculum and children's needs in the round at a time of nature and climate emergency.

Main Source:

Mannion, G., Ramjan, C., McNicol, S., Sowerby, M. and Lambert, P. (2023) *Teaching, Learning and Play in the Outdoors: a survey of provision in 2022*. NatureScotResearch Report 1313.

Children's Parliament (2022) *Children's Parliament Investigates Learning forSustainability*. Edinburgh [online]

Written submission from Dr Roger Scrutton

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.

#c

The residential nature of the experience is a key element in the effectiveness of the learning, knowledge and understanding taken away by the pupils. The residential environment enhances the affective learning elements and personal and social skills that are, sadly, less well developed in certain parts of society, commonly amongst more deprived households. There is research evidence that learning personal and social skills also promotes a better attitude towards learning in general and greater cognitive gain from the educational intervention, as seen in achievement and attainment.

It takes time for these processes to kick in. A long weekend (Friday to Monday) might be enough to establish the affective learning elements, but 5 days / 4 nights is ideal, allows the time and space for the learning process and also fits well into the school timetable. Some targeted academic outcomes, e.g. on field studies courses, might be achieved over a weekend.

However, there is also research evidence that the outdoor learning experience contributes even more to achievement and attainment if it is embedded in the work of the class over the course of the school year. This depends on teachers visiting the residential experience and its relevance to the curriculum prior to and following the 5 days / 4 nights itself.

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?

Yes, sometime in P6 to S4 is probably the best time to attend residential education in terms of their ability to benefit. The nature of the activities on the residential may well change depending on the year, with P6 focusing more on personal and social development and S4 taking on more physically demanding activities.

I have conducted research that includes P5 pupils; on the other hand, residential field studies courses are likely to be linked to subject-specific areas tackled at, say, S5. School ethos and available facilities at school might also play a part. Some schools have almost zero opportunities to take pupils on outdoor learning interventions, others might have plenty of opportunities, and exactly where the residential fits into this may well be relevant. So, I would suggest guidance, including some advice on the pros and cons outlined above.

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

Yes, it should provide funding. Research has shown that residential outdoor learning is more beneficial to pupils from lower social groups, where finding a parental contribution to cost is very difficult indeed. At present, the take up of residential education by schools is very mixed - some schools find the funds (with help from fund raising by parent-led bodies and even the pupils themselves), but many schools don't and the educational benefit is lost for pupils at those schools. So, funds should be made available for all state schools to send their pupils on a residential week. The level of this funding might be an issue, but it should be enough to allow all pupils to have the opportunity.

Do you have any other comments?

As a research fellow in outdoor education I specialise in evaluating the benefit of residential and other forms of outdoor education using quantitative methods. I can generate numbers, but I can say that there is not one pupil (well, maybe one or two who did not like being away from home) who does not remember their residential visit and can tell you how it has impacted positively on their life, either their development as a person or through their career, and this at a time when personal, transferable and interdisciplinary skills are essential in the job market and for a healthy society and economy.