

Proposed Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill

Introduction

A proposal for a Bill to ensure that young people have the opportunity to experience residential outdoor education.

The consultation runs from 29 April 2022 to 22 July 2022

All those wishing to respond to the consultation are strongly encouraged to enter their responses electronically through this survey. This makes collation of responses much simpler and quicker. However, the option also exists of sending in a separate response (in hard copy or by other electronic means such as e-mail), and details of how to do so are included in the member's consultation document.

Questions marked with an asterisk (*) require an answer.

All responses must include a name and contact details. Names will only be published if you give us permission, and contact details are never published – but we may use them to contact you if there is a query about your response. If you do not include a name and/or contact details, we may have to disregard your response.

Please note that you must complete the survey in order for your response to be accepted. If you don't wish to complete the survey in a single session, you can choose "Save and Continue later" at any point. Whilst you have the option to skip particular questions, you must continue to the end of the survey and press "Submit" to have your response fully recorded.

Please ensure you have read the consultation document before responding to any of the questions that follow. In particular, you should read the information contained in the document about how your response will be handled. The consultation document is available here:

[Consultation Document](#)

[Privacy Notice](#)

I confirm that I have read and understood the Privacy Notice which explains how my personal data will be used.

On the previous page we asked you if you are UNDER 12 YEARS old, and you responded Yes to this question.

If this is the case, we will have to contact your parent or guardian for consent.

If you are under 12 years of age, please put your contact details into the textbox. This can be your email address or phone number. We will then contact you and your parents to receive consent.

Otherwise please confirm that you are or are not under 12 years old.

No Response

About you

Please choose whether you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation.
Note: If you choose "individual" and consent to have the response published, it will appear under your own name. If you choose "on behalf of an organisation" and consent to have the response published, it will be published under the organisation's name.

on behalf of an organisation

Which of the following best describes you? (If you are a professional or academic, but not in a subject relevant to the consultation, please choose "Member of the public".)

No Response

Please select the category which best describes your organisation

Public sector body (Scottish/UK Government/Government agency, local authority, NDPB)

Optional: You may wish to explain briefly what the organisation does, its experience and expertise in the subject-matter of the consultation, and how the view expressed in the response was arrived at (e.g. whether it is the view of particular office-holders or has been approved by the membership as a whole).

Contributors include NatureScot's 2 Outdoor Learning Advisors; others from the People and Places team and a Board Member.

Please choose one of the following:

I am content for this response to be published and attributed to me or my organisation

Please provide your Full Name or the name of your organisation. (Only give the name of your organisation if you are submitting a response on its behalf).

(Note: the name will not be published if you have asked for the response to be anonymous or "not for publication". Otherwise this is the name that will be published with your response).

NatureScot

Please provide details of a way in which we can contact you if there are queries regarding your response. Email is preferred but you can also provide a postal address or phone number.

We will not publish these details.

Aim and approach - Note: All answers to the questions in this section may be published (unless your response is "not for publication").

Q1. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposed Bill? (Please note that this question is compulsory.)

Partially supportive

Please explain the reasons for your response.

We are supportive of all young people being offered a high quality residential experience during their school career. However, these residential should be demonstrably educational (rather than just recreational) and part of a progression of outdoor play and learning experiences in their establishment grounds, local greenspaces and places further afield.

Outdoor Learning Practical guidance, ideas and support for teachers and practitioners in Scotland (<https://education.gov.scot/media/0fklf35p/hwb24-ol-support.pdf>) highlights this need for strong curricular links for any outdoor learning (including residential): "The place or context in which learning takes place is an integral part of the learning process... Outdoor learning encompasses the entire range of learning experiences undertaken outside. Whether it is reading a book outside or participating in an overseas expedition, the curriculum design principles apply."

A progression of outdoor play and learning should start as support for creative, active and challenging play for the early years, and be continued as an integral part of children and young people's experience throughout their school years up to and including Senior Phase.

Many educators still need support to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence in order to provide good quality outdoor learning and play opportunities. Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning's Vision for Outdoor Learning in Scotland <https://education.gov.scot/media/gnufmnmq/hwb24-cfe-through-outdoor-learning.pdf> "all children and young people are participating in a range of progressive and creative outdoor learning experiences which are clearly part of the curriculum; schools and centres are providing regular, frequent, enjoyable and challenging opportunities for all children and young people to learn outdoors throughout their school career and beyond; teachers and educators embed outdoor learning in the curriculum so that learning in the outdoor environment becomes a reality for all children and young people." has yet to be realised.

The consultation document suggests that 'Over the last two years outdoor learning has become routine in schools- a threshold has been crossed.' We would argue that outdoor learning is not fully embedded across primary, and especially secondary, schools in Scotland. NatureScot's research on outdoor learning practice (<https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-commissioned-report-779-teaching-learning-and-play-outdoors-survey-school-and-pre-school>) consistently shows secondary schools in particular can struggle to include outdoor learning as regular practice across different disciplines and levels. More work needs to be done here in order to provide a good foundation for the residential experience in order to optimise benefits to pupils.

Q2. Do you think legislation is required, or are there other ways in which the proposed Bill's aims could be achieved more effectively? Please explain the reasons for your response.

Legislation is required in order for this to happen quickly and equitably. Alongside this "stick", parallel effort should be put in to the "carrot" of convincing educators on the reasons why, to get 'buy in'. This includes raising awareness of the benefits of investing time and resources into outdoor learning and play, including residential. In line with the Muir report, implementation should be carried out in partnership with the education sector (and young people themselves), not just done to them.

The recent HMIE report Successful approaches to learning outdoors (22/02/2022) is a welcome recognition of the value of outdoor learning. We would hope, in the wake of this report, that HMIE could routinely inspect outdoor learning and proactively share the positive impacts. Outdoor learning organisations and educational establishments should all continue to share approaches and (formal and informal) research to inspire and encourage others to do more, e.g. <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/young-people-learning-outdoors-and-developing-skills/learning-local-greenspace>

Funding is also required for Career Long Professional Learning, which needs to be embedded and required from Initial Teacher Education onwards.

More could be done to ensure educators are fulfilling the obligations in the GTCS Standards around

Q2. Do you think legislation is required, or are there other ways in which the proposed Bill's aims could be achieved more effectively? Please explain the reasons for your response.

Outdoor Learning and Learning for Sustainability and ensuring the entitlement for Learning for Sustainability (which includes Outdoor Learning) and for daily contact with nature is realised for all young people.

Q3. The proposed Bill will cover residential outdoor education provision for local authority and grant-aided schools only. Which of the following best expresses your view that independent schools or any other education establishments should not be covered by this obligation.

Unsure

Please give reasons for your response.

All young people should have the opportunity of a high quality residential experience in nature, however independent schools should not be publicly funded to deliver this.

Q4. The intention is that the obligation to ensure that residential outdoor education is provided would fall on those who are responsible for arranging the provision, e.g. education authorities and managers of grant-aided schools. Which of the following best expresses your view of this proposal?

Partially supportive

Please explain the reasons for your response.

We are supportive of this, however, a coordinated national effort will be needed in order to ensure there are enough 'beds' where and when they are needed and to assure a consistency in quality of practice and places. Quality assurance across ALL residential centres is essential to ensure high standards and equity of provision for all children and young people across Scotland, whatever their background or school location. There are also benefits to national level sharing of good practice and lessons learned.

Funding

Q5. Which of the following best expresses your view of how residential outdoor education experiences should be funded?

In some other way

Please explain the reasons for your response. (If you consider Scottish Government funding should be provided to local authorities, please set out the mechanism for such funding, for example through block grant, ring fenced funding etc.)

We are not sure of the implications of all the options here.

We feel that there should be ring-fenced funding for all outdoor learning including, but not limited to, residential. Although it doesn't cost a lot to provide good quality outdoor learning in establishment grounds and local greenspaces, funding is still needed for the likes of professional learning for educators and minor biodiversity improvements to some spaces (that could come from another budget), which would enhance learning opportunities.

There should not be a 'postcode lottery' (as there once was for music tuition costs, e.g.); a consistent approach across all LAs is needed.

Financial Implications

Q6. Any new law can have a financial impact which would affect individuals, businesses, the public sector, or others. What financial impact do you think this proposal could have if it became law?

some increase in costs

Please explain the reasons for your answer, including who you would expect to feel the financial impact of the proposal, and if there are any ways you think the proposal could be delivered more cost-effectively.

Residential locations should follow good practice in sustainability and may need financial support to bring them up to standard (e.g. to insulate buildings).

It might be useful to explore if residential staff could provide outreach services for schools (which may already happen in some instances). These could take place with pupils/ teachers in school grounds or local greenspace as a precursor to their residential experience, and provide more coherence with the curriculum. However, this may add to centre costs. The role of local Ranger services in supporting this work could also be explored further.

As noted in the paper, many outdoor professionals have left the sector due to the implications of the pandemic so investment will be needed to attract and train new staff.

Some families may not have the appropriate clothing or footwear to enable the young person to maximise the opportunity so may need school/LA/centre support. Depending on the funding mechanism chosen, some families may face high costs in attending a residential.

Standard/ Quality of provision

Q7. Which of the following best expresses your view on the proposal for a quality framework to ensure the quality of the education provision of outdoor centres?

Partially supportive

Please give reasons for your response, including whether this should be done by HMIE using a quality framework as part of their inspection of schools and the extent to which, if any, it should be statutory.

We are not aware of an organisation that is better set up to do this than HMIE. As outlined in the paper, HMIE has a proven, tried and tested approach to inspecting a range of services. However, they would need support in developing their understanding of a range of aspects of outdoor learning and residential provision.

As well as Education Scotland and the outdoor sector, the quality framework could be developed with input from the environmental sector and young people representative of the range of young people that will be accessing this service. Care would need to be taken to ensure that it is not a tick box exercise. Could a progression of outdoor learning in school grounds, local greenspaces and places further afield be incorporated into this framework?

Activities during the residential should include those designed to foster connection to nature, pro-environmental behaviours and pro-nature conservation behaviours (see <https://www.derby.ac.uk/blog/5-ways-closer-nature/>). Such provision also provides an opportunity to build awareness of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code in practice, using the resources NatureScot has recently refreshed (<https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/act-and-access-code/education-resources>).

Quality provision should also include the intended learning/curriculum links (to all curricular areas, not just

Q7. Which of the following best expresses your view on the proposal for a quality framework to ensure the quality of the education provision of outdoor centres?

'the usual suspects' like Biology and Geography) and outcomes for health and wellbeing and the development of skills for learning, life and work. This should be clearly communicated to parents and carers and the young people themselves, as well as schools. Any self-evaluation framework should involve all stakeholders.

We agree that inspections would need to be at school level (rather than centre level) to enable schools and local authorities to be flexible and offer bespoke residential experiences that are part of a progression and build on work done 'in' school.

For the reasons outlined in the paper, we feel it is necessary to make it a statutory requirement to provide the opportunity of residential outdoor education, whether at a local authority centre or elsewhere.

You state that "It is difficult to determine the number of young people, disadvantaged or otherwise, taking part in residential outdoor education." Our research, which you cite (<https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-commissioned-report-779-teaching-learning-and-play-outdoors-survey-school-and-pre-school>), provides some insights, including "In general, pupils attending primary and secondary schools in more deprived areas were less likely to be in receipt of a residential outdoor experience, and were more likely to experience shorter outdoor events."

Q8. Which of the following best expresses your view that the age range of 12 – 16 is appropriate for participation in the residential outdoor education experience?

Partially supportive

Please give reasons for your response, including whether you think other age ranges would be more appropriate.

Young people P7 – S4 are most likely to be able to reap the full range of benefits that a residential experience away from home can offer, however we would again emphasise the importance of a progression of outdoor learning (including residential, where appropriate) in establishment grounds, local greenspaces and places further afield would bring greatest benefit. Awards might also form part of this progression (see <https://www.johnmuirtrust.org/whats-new/news/1149-nature-awards-resource-launched>)

A one-off, stand-alone residential experience would be of far less value to young people than one which is part of a progression over a number of years and with each year. Curricular guidance says breadth, depth, coherence and progression is expected; this should include Outdoor Learning, and residential.

On the other hand, a progression of outdoor learning experiences and places starting from early years might enable pupils to benefit from an outdoor residential experience at a younger age.

Equalities

Q9. Any new law can have an impact on different individuals in society, for example as a result of their age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

What impact could this proposal have on particular people if it became law? If you do not have a view skip to next question.

Please explain the reasons for your answer and if there are any ways you think the proposal could avoid negative impacts on particular people.

In bringing in this new law, care would need to be taken to make the consultation process fully inclusive and accessible to as wide a range of stakeholders as possible to ensure no one is disadvantaged.

Q10. How might equity of provision for all be ensured, regardless of socio-economic status? Please give reasons for your response.

Equity would be facilitated by selecting the appropriate funding mechanism and quality assurance approach.

It might be a barrier (as well as a great opportunity) for some young people to have an outdoor experience somewhere very different from where they live. This barrier could be reduced by offering a progression of residential (as part of a progression of outdoor learning), e.g. having one night camping in the school grounds (or sleeping in the school hall with lots of outdoor experiences) in the Infant department, and so on. A range of outdoor centres (as options as part of this progression) could be offered, including some in/close to cities/disadvantaged areas. This progression would also help better support young people with specific physical or cultural needs.

Sustainability

Q11. Any new law can impact on work to protect and enhance the environment, achieve a sustainable economy, and create a strong, healthy, and just society for future generations.

Do you think the proposal could impact in any of these areas? [If you do not have a view then skip to next question]

Please explain the reasons for your answer, including what you think the impact of the proposal could be, and if there are any ways you think the proposal could avoid negative impacts?

This proposal implies that young people need to go 'away' in order to experience 'proper' outdoors. There is much value in using local greenspaces for learning (see <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/young-people-learning-outdoors-and-developing-skills/learning-local-greenspace/beyond-your-boundary-easy-steps-learning-local-4>, for example) Benefits include not needing transport, fostering a sense of pride and ownership of local spaces, and supporting efforts to improve them in response to the climate and nature emergencies.

As part of a genuine progression of outdoor learning experiences and spaces (bearing in mind that this will be different for, e.g. a pupil from Lewis and a pupil from Glasgow) offering high quality outdoor learning, including activities designed to foster nature connectedness, should ultimately support the development of pro-environmental and pro-nature conservation attitudes and behaviours, which are necessary to for the longer term survival of our planet. As mentioned above, building awareness and practical knowledge of Scotland's access rights and responsibilities should be part of this.

Residential centres/locations should be good examples of sustainability and could be used as a learning resource in themselves. Similarly, transport should follow good practice in sustainably and be used as a learning resource, while active travel to learn in local greenspaces on a regular basis supports health and wellbeing.

General

Q12. Do you have any other additional comments or suggestions on the proposed Bill (which have not already been covered in any of your responses to earlier questions)?

Overall, we are supportive of every young person in Scotland being offered a residential. Alongside the better provision of regular outdoor learning and play in school grounds and local greenspaces, we consider that such a requirement will contribute to one of the key "conditions for success" proposed for the new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy 2022-45 (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-biodiversity-strategy-consultation/pages/5/>) "Regular and high quality outdoor learning in - and about - nature from 3-18 years has a key role to play in increasing climate-nature literacy, positive behaviours and an update in the career pathways that will be needed to deliver a nature rich Scotland."

We would also emphasise that the evidence does not support the statement in the consultation that "over the last two years Outdoor Learning has become routine in schools – a threshold has been crossed."

NatureScot's last national survey of outdoor learning provision in 2015

<https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-commissioned-report-779-teaching-learning-and-play-outdoors-survey-school-and-pre-school> highlighted that "provision is unevenly spread and further substantial increases are realistically achievable" and in the light of recent more recent evaluation work on the Learning in Local Greenspace project, we believe this remains the case. We are currently repeating this national survey and the results of this will be published in autumn this year.

Investment of the scale needed to provide every young person in Scotland with a residential experience could be used to give educators the knowledge, skills, confidence and passion to provide 'everyday outdoor learning' in establishment grounds and greenspaces within walking distance.

NatureScot is happy to share resources and/or training (for residential centre staff, HMIE staff or anyone others who would benefit) on good quality outdoor learning in nature and a progression of place based learning. Please do not hesitate to get in touch.