

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

Third sector (charitable, campaigning, social enterprise, voluntary, non-profit)

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).

Scottish Environmental & Outdoor Education Centres is a large Scottish Charity (by trading income and resource availability). It operates through a wholly-owned subsidiary – SOEC – a not for profit, social enterprise.

SOECs Mission is to inspire and empower children and young people to develop the qualities and skills they will need in their future; a future which will be dominated by climate change. With this support, children and young people will find the solutions to survive and thrive in a world of rapid change.

Since the economic downturn of 2009, SOEC has:

- generated around £1.4m every year;
- derived over 95% of income from trading;
- invested over £2m in our the three Centres: Dounans, Broomlee and Belmont;
- reduced borrowing from over £1m to £75,000;
- employed 40-60 people annually;
- worked with 12,000 young people per annum;
- providing over 100,000 learning and development days in the outdoors annually, and
- has a Social Return on Investment Ratio of £1: £11.

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).

Scottish Environmental & Outdoor Education Centres Association, trading as SOEC.

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.)

Fully supportive

Please explain the reasons for your response.

SOEC Abbreviations used in this Submission: Children and young people – the terms may be used singly and interchangeably; TSP – Third Sector Providers; ROL – Residential Outdoor Learning, which is shorthand for the immersive away from home residential experience combined with an outdoor learning programme. OEd is Outdoor Education. CfE is Curriculum for Excellence.

SOEC fully endorses the proposals of this Bill. The Bill creates an opportunity for a major sea-change in education in Scotland as young people in Scotland need support to face the enormous and rapid changes brought about by climate change.

We welcome the opportunities that the Bill creates to debate issues that are critical to ensuring that ROL moves to a sustainable basis and is available to teachers and pupils for decades to come.

The vision for the future is ROL is widely shared in Scotland and the Bill creates the chance for the development of a successful strategy for implementation. This has to be clear-sighted on the potential of ROL to contribute significantly to Scotland's children and young people, and for Scotland's environment, communities and economy. Scotland's CfE is being improved and ROL can make important contributions to that upgrade.

While the Bill helps us to consider where we want to be, we must start from where we are now. The Bill creates an opportunity for progression and development for effective implementation. Progression to an effective strategy that is vital for the success of the Bill and will take several years.

This raises important issues of leadership of the sector, and the timing necessary to deliver a viable strategy. This will be complicated as we enter a further period of financial constraint. The Bill can be successful if implementation strategies take these factors into account; we should not develop strategies that assume a booming economy.

ROL has been in decline for 20 years as exemplified by the creeping closure of Centres. More recently, ROL was brought to a shuddering halt and for 24 months, pupils could not access the residential experience, nor the majority of providers (Third Sector providers) engage in meaningful work with schools. Since the greater number of ROL experiences are provided by charities and not-for-profit social enterprises, this halt to trading was an existential threat. That we are still operating today is due to the tremendous support of politicians, teachers and parents, and the wider public. It is also due to the resilience and business acumen of the social enterprises; characteristics that will be essential in this decade for the development of a sustainable strategy.

We survived the pandemic, but the profession is now suffering from a form of 'long Covid.' Symptoms are impacting our primary asset – our staff teams – at a time when the pool of experienced outdoor education specialists is depleted. Also, the market in which we trade remains greatly disrupted. While many teachers are keen to return, others are still being held back. Numbers are down and it is likely that ROL social enterprises will experience a shortfall in income again in 2022. At least one council has said its schools will not return citing the loss of a lot of money due to Covid. From another council's schools we are projecting just 10% of their pre-Covid income figure. We hope for a return to near normal trading conditions next year.

We cannot bounce-back overnight. Like other businesses, we are experiencing disruption in supply chains, staffing, and customers. The disruption is continuing at a time when we must contend with significant cost of living increases, particularly in energy costs. There will be a crunch as the cost-of-living increase falls on parents at a time when ROL providers are forced to pass on cost increases.

The aspirations of the Bill may take several years to come to fruition. A 'Vision for Children and Young People 2021-2031' was created by the Youthlink Outdoor Learning Group early this year. It's 10-year time horizon to get from where we are, to where we want to be, is perhaps valid for this Bill too.

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

The Board and Staff team of SOEC welcome the Members Bill as a major step toward both stabilising the future of ROL for children and young people, and saving the sector on which high quality ROL depends.

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.

The potential benefits to young people from ROL are huge. The benefits of the ROL experience for young people have never been more important. It is vital today and will be more so in the future. Today these benefits are better understood, and ROL has produced astonishing results.

Realising these benefits should be the ambition of the Bill. Legislation is required to enshrine the right of all young people to an entitlement to residential outdoor learning experiences while at school.

The entitlement to ROL experiences is vital. So too is how it can be successfully rolled out and managed. It will require the wide range of stakeholders to be brought together to agree a strategic approach and to agree effective implementation. It will require legitimisation of the role of TSPs in decision-making and the creation of a functioning framework for stakeholders to coalesce around. For this, legislation is required.

For the last 20 years, the sector has been in steady decline. Failed leadership, inadequate data and information, an inappropriate level of competition e.g. for funding, weak strategies and failed implementation, have all benefited vested interests at the expense of children. This track record and the need to reverse it makes the need for legislation essential.

The 'mixed economy' of provision has not worked. Failure to make it work indicates strongly the need for legislation. An unlevel playing field has been set against those who deliver most ROL (Third Sector organisations) and there has been a notable lack of effective oversight resulting in profligate and failed projects. The public and politicians appear constantly surprised that ROL goes unrecognised and is constantly in decline. Why does it remain stuck in a 'failure to launch' mode? Legislation will bring clarity and resolve barriers and issues where nothing else can.

The economics of both the country and the sector must be addressed in relation to ROL. The economic downturn in 2009 and resulting decade of austerity resulted in some vested interests treating funding for OL as a zero-sum game. This prevented recognition of good work and suppressed partnership working. Today, increasing living costs greatly affects parents who pay for the ROL experience, threaten the sector and jeopardise the plans for such a Bill.

Both Parliamentarians and members of the public will want to know that the money is used as intended by the Bill. It is too easy for vested interest to reinterpret the purpose of the Bill e.g. from 'residential outdoor learning' to 'outdoor learning.' There are opportunities to tighten up proposed and existing frameworks but legislation is vital to ensure the money to be delivered as intended.

Other policy drivers should be reviewed and amended to support legislation. The best results for young people result from specialist OEd providers collaborating with teachers. Similarly, since Third Sector provider deliver the vast majority of ROL experience through councils, partnership working will result in better leadership. For example,

Policy Intention Review

Scottish National Performance Framework

COSLA will look to reform local public services. To do this it will work with:

- local communities
- the Scottish and UK governments
- staff and trade unions
- the Scottish and UK parliaments

Reference to working in Community Planning Partnerships The role of Voluntary organisations is mentioned in the first paragraph of the framework but it should be made explicit that councils will also work with voluntary organisations for the delivery of services.

This provides another opportunity to explicitly refer to working in partnership with TSOs.

Scottish National Strategy for Economic Transformation "celebrates entrepreneurial activity in every sector of our economy

a just transition to net zero

make public services more productive and innovative;"

Amend to recognise:

the contribution of the Third Sector in operating viable businesses in the delivery of services to schools;
the contribution TSOs make to a just transition to net zero by empowering young people; or
the innovative capacity of TSOs that deliver services for ROL.

As yet, there is no recognition of the economic contribution of TSO in the local and national economy, no

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recognition of the long terms jobs sustained across Scotland, and no recognition of TSOs contribution to creating and sustaining green jobs in Scotland.

Improving outcomes for young people through school education – Audit Commission

"Teachers, schools, pupils and parents working together will be key to a successful recovery."

Should include 'other educators' supporting formal education such as ROL providers.

On several occasions in the last 20 years, TSOs have been encouraged by government to get involved early in the developing partnerships e.g. from Community Planning Partnerships and RICs to Developing the Young Workforce (2015). On each occasion, councils have been approached and their response is invariably – "we do not know what we are doing yet but when we do, we may contact you." The opportunity is not followed up.

Councils will collaborate with other public bodies to pool budgets but they do not recognise the benefits to service provision that social enterprises bring, from the economics that provide successful, resilient, long-term provision, to the innovative capabilities of social enterprises. What we see is that 'partnership' is merely shorthand for joined-up government. As a result, important delivery agents (the TSOs) are marginalised and excluded.

Legislation is needed to clarify the contribution and role of National Voluntary Organisations. At its simplest, councils will not support an NVO because to do so is to indirectly support the other 31 councils. Experience also shows that when issues are pushed up to council coordination level (COSLA, ADES etc), the pervasive council culture rapidly shuts the doors; they cannot help and they do not have the money to help. TSO are treated as competitors in a zero-sum game.

As councils continue to close their residential centres, and we move away from the 50-year old model of councils running Outdoor Education Centres, it may be that a few TSOs will provide residential experiences for all pupils from across all 32 local authority areas. How can legislation legitimise the position of National Voluntary Organisations and ensure a new viable framework for ROL delivery?

The challenge is to place ROL on a sustainable basis; to ensure it is an option for pupils and teachers for decades to come. This is at odds with the trends underlying decline noted above. To reverse the trend, we must not replicate that which has been tried and failed; we must do things differently. For this reason, the Bill is welcome and legislation is essential.

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.

Neutral (neither support nor oppose)

Please give reasons for your response.

SOEC is one of a few organisations in education that works with children, young people and adults, of all ages and abilities, across all socio-economic groups from across Scotland and beyond. This offers a hugely valuable breadth and depth of experience.

Another way of looking at this is to ask, where do we want our future Leaders to come from? SOECs seeks to inspire and empower young people to develop qualities (confidence, resilience, growth mind-set) and skills (communication, teamwork, problem solving etc). These qualities and skills are the composite elements of Leadership. In skilled hands, many outdoor activities are excellent at introducing and developing these qualities and skills. However it is the immersive, away-from-home residential experience the successfully triggers change in young people, changing their self-perception and self-belief, developing a growth mind-set and expanding their potential.

Can we unpack this further?

In the past, we have focused on young people who are hard to reach, from areas of multiple deprivation, possibly from disrupted homes, erring toward law breaking and failing at school. Certainly, the residential experience can do a lot to reduce the gap between these children and others and change their prospects. Today, young people with additional needs still struggle to gain employment but they have enormous potential to contribute to society and the economy. The residential experience has proved it can significantly improve their perception and help realise their potential.

It is possible to overlook the large swath of young people, perhaps 80% of student and young people. Some start the basics of quality and skill acquisition at residential but many do not have this opportunity and some do not start on the fundamental qualities and skills of leadership until they start work. We often see that it is from this wider group with broader life experience that effective leaders emerge. In seeking to

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make these opportunities available to all young people, the Bill offers a major game-changer. Do we wish our leaders to hail from a relatively small spectrum of society, that has great wealth and high levels of education; people who believe they are born to rule? Or do we want to realise the leadership potential of thousands who are benefitting from a better education system and able to access greater diversity of life experience? ROL is vital to young people here and now, in their schools, communities and for the world of work. In developing these qualities and skills, the immersive residential widens opportunity, reduces inequality, raises ambition, increases potential, and lays the foundations for their future. They are the essential qualities and skills for leadership and effective contributors. Given the future we all face, Scotland needs to focus on its primary assets – its children and young people, and ROL can meet their needs.

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.

The Bill can achieve several outcomes beyond the primary purpose of ensuring that the 5-day immersive experience is embedded in a pupils education. It could:

- Support progression of professional standing within among OEd specialists and providers;
- cultivate understanding among stakeholders (parents, teachers, academics, professional providers, and pupils) of the educational and developmental value of the ROL experience (while simultaneously scotching some of the previous red-herring myths and barriers that impeded uptake in the past;)
- support teachers and schools - to avoid the residential thoughtlessly creating further work-load burdens on teachers, the Bill creates opportunities to develop understanding of partnership working with OEd specialists being recognised as "other educators", and sharing of solutions that teachers already use to make the residential a long-standing feature in their schools.
- Parents – want to contribute effectively to their child's education, and apart from them understanding and buying into the opportunities of the away-from-home experience, it can also help them in related experiences such as scout and guides in their communities, and supporting schools as parent helpers...
- Businesses – the creation of a business/OL interface, to maximise the opportunities that ROL creates for delivering the work ready skills that industry and business want to see in the future workforce;
- Creation of an academic network of research and evaluation that encompasses the breadth of outcomes for pupils covering health and wellbeing, mental health, sustainable development, as well as CfE

Education authorities are well placed to support arranging provision of these experiences and some have done this for decades. Several councils have progressed to launching tenders for ROL provision. For efficiency and viability of national providers interfacing with 32 local authority areas, it would be preferable to use the existing national tender portal (Public Contracts Scotland) than councils duplicating this with their own contract portals. There is also a need to avoid placing councils in the invidious position of simultaneously supplier and provider. To do so opens the door to compromising the level playing field and to distortion of the market. A thorough analysis of the economic of all provision options would benefit decision-making.

The same applies to the plethora of leader organisations. SAPOE has never been a national network but keeps the majority of providers at arms-length, and creates a constantly changing chameleon as councils struggle to retain a foothold in OL provision.

However, the range of potential outcomes above alludes to inputs from a broader grouping including Education Scotland, HMle, the Education Directorate, Universities, business and industry, parents etc. A new type of grouping which is outwith standard formats would support creative approaches needed for sustainability.

A view is being promulgated that councils can provide outdoor learning better and cheaper than Third Sector residential providers. There have been many unfounded and inaccurate statements but without objective verification from thorough economic analysis, they are a distraction and jeopardise the

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sustainability of any solution. There have been costly failures in the last 20 years. If these are replicated and we do not learn from them, they will undermine the sustainable proposals for young people into the future.

Funding

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

In full by the Scottish Government

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.)

ROL delivers a great deal in terms of Curriculum for Excellence. We support teachers and schools in its delivery. As a major adjunct of formal education, ROL should be funded, in total or in part, through the Education Budget. A 5-day residential for a year cohort of pupils will be around £24m. It is a very small fraction of the overall education budget, the more so given its contribution to schools and young people. To avoid misdirection, funding should go directly to young people via their schools. Reinterpretation enables money to leak to other areas of OL and other projects. Any money that is directed toward staffing, capital, revenue or running costs will reduce the amount going to young people, reducing the number of young people benefiting from it.

Third Sector providers already have resources and staff in place, and viable business models, to make this Bill sustainable. It will not go directly to supporting Third Sector organisations but money going to young people for residential will have the added effect of supporting the long-term viability and sustainability of Third Sector organisations – a double "bang for the buck". A strong ROL sector will benefit all OL. The goal remains, to enable young people to experience different types of OL regularly and frequently.

In addition, since these organisations are mostly not-for-profit, social enterprises, the money is cycled into the local and national economy in the form of salaries and supplies. Third sector OL providers currently make a small but significant contribution to education and the economy and to sustaining green jobs. With the level of certainty the Bill offers, the level of contribution will increase.

A future strategy will require all proposals undergo rigorous cost/benefit analyses, and full cost accounting. Some projects in the last 20 years have been highly profligate. To develop a viable strategy, each proposal should determine the cost of their work, and their potential to expand.

Residential Outdoor Learning can be an example for success, signposting new relationship between councils and TSOs to improve and benefit service delivery.

Under certain conditions, it may be preferable, and may appear attractive, to split the costs between Scottish Government (for the tuition aspects of ROL) and parents (for accommodation and travel).

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 reduction 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.

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?

A clearer understanding and an increase in numbers will improve the quality of the experience and may lead to an initial reduction in costs although this might be short-term given inflationary increases. This suggests that absolute figures for costs of a cohort of young people be index linked in future years.

There are also cost benefits from considering the wider financial impact. The residential can trigger positive changes in mental health and well-being that may result in current costs addressing a wide range of issues from dietary health, bullying, obesity etc.

Many Third Sector ROL providers are located in rural areas and though SMEs, some are the largest employers in their area. Some have operated to viable business models over many decades. As not-for-profit organisations, the income generated is largely cycled into the local and national economies in terms of salaries and supplies.

ROL also does a lot to support the economy. The list of qualities and skills that TSOs deliver would be identified by many business and industry leaders as essential for the future workforce.

Some business leaders go further and recognise the value of ROL experience to business in terms of Environmental and Social Governance. Gary McEwan, CEO of Elevator, said of their regular experiences at SOEC that, "you are on the right tracks I'm sure... I believe SOEC provides many solutions... Society more than ever requires young people to innovate and create new things on a bedrock of understanding of social, economic and environmental issues... nobody could disagree that the economy needs young people to experience what you do there."

The pervasive economic imperative is constantly "increased productivity" and while many think tanks will catalogue the qualities and skills young people need in the future workplace, there are few that can evidence their effectiveness in delivery as well as a specialist, outdoor educators and the immersive residential experience. The downstream economic benefits from ROL supporting the development of qualities and skills identified by business as vital for the future workforce is considerable.

There are financial implications from all OEd initiatives and it is vital for sustainability to undertake through cost/benefit analyses including that of job displacement. A robust, long term strategy must draw on the most cost effective and efficient interventions, and the options for service provision to up-scale and expand.

There will be a need to analyse the environmental costs/benefits of all options, for example transporting young people to OL experiences. When school travel is required for around an hour, impact will reduce with multi-day experiences.

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?

Fully 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.

First, it is necessary to recognise that ROL has enormous potential to support child and youth development and deliver on a wider range of Government policies and priorities including health and wellbeing, mental health, sustainable development, economic development, and of course Education and Curriculum for Excellence.

Currently, most ROL is provided by different charities which follow a diversity of emphases. Some are uniformed organisations while others emphasise religion, the environment, or support for young people with additional needs. They contribute to the benefits above to various extents and some more than others.

This diversity covers many of the emphases we'd like to see for our children and young people. It forms a foundation from which the range of diverse organisations can converge on education and coalesce around child and youth development.

There are other providers that we do not 'see' as educational, instead engaging in distraction and

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entertainment (with activities such as laser gun games, quad biking, zorbing, stag & hen nights etc.) At this end of the spectrum, providers allude only vaguely to child development and pay only lip service to education.

Within the right leadership structure and with oversight, diversity can be a strength. Without leadership, it contributes to failure exemplified by the mixed economy provider model that prevailed in recent decades which has driven the decline of the sector.

Quality is dependent on seeing ROL providers in terms of their intention to contribution to education and development outcomes. It would benefit the sector, and motivate providers to move along the quality spectrum if we distinguish between those that deliver education and personal development, and those that do not.

Quality can be maintained and regulated both internally and externally. Internally, organisations should demonstrate their commitment to education and other priority areas through their Business Plans, their policy documents (e.g. sustainable development policy, UNCR statements), in the marketing materials and in their staff development. (For example, all SOEC Tutors undergo training in CfE, 4 Capacities and linking their work to them.)

For many years, AHOEC Scotland, membership was dependent on organisations explicitly committing to education. IOL membership required a commitment to quality and sustainable development. Going forward, the sector should evolve its own professional association that self-regulates its members and the quality of ROL delivery and supports on-going professionalisation of the sector, encouraging convergence on educational provision and coalescence around child/youth development.

Externally, recognising ROL providers as educational organisations, supporting teachers and schools with outdoor specialists being acknowledged as "other educators" brings the sector within eligibility for inspection by HMIE. SOEC was one of the last national voluntary organisations to be inspected by HMIE in 2003. As with AALA, the sector would welcome professional inspection by credible agencies whose staff have in-depth understanding of the ROL sector and its potential, and who are willing to share best practice.

Going forward, it is possible to see a strengthening of the profession with outdoor education specialists moving between the diversity of emphases of different providers, to become more rounded practitioners. Adherence to high quality outcomes would be determined by providers and regulated externally. There is value in determining distinction among providers. We must be more ambitious for our children and young people and it has to be recognised that ROL can deliver multiple educational and developmental outcomes. Funding would only go to schools attending recognised Outdoor Education Centres. Funding for pupil residential would help stabilise ROL organisations, creating the foundations for them to grow and would be a stimulus to ROL providers to progress along the spectrum to high quality provision.

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.

SOEC works with a wide range of children and young people of all ages and abilities. We provide holiday activities for local pre-school children and our youngest residential is for a composite class of P2/3 pupils for 3 days/2 nights. We have study revision groups and offer Field Studies programmes for Standard grade and Highers for older students, as well as leadership residential for seniors.

There are many excellent reasons to support ROL for children at any stage, and particularly so for secondary not least because their engagement in residential in recent years seems to be faltering. We would welcome further discussion around the age-range issues. Recent history suggests that policy can impact on implementation like an amoeba; as we push forward in one age group, we contract in others. Further consideration of age-range issues is required if we are to avoid unintended consequences e.g. support for one group inadvertently leading a reduction in others.

This amoeba-like progression is contrary to the often-stated policy position that young people to engage in different types of learning regularly and frequently throughout their school career. This needs further consideration for the sustainability of the ROL experiences.

However at this time, further consideration should be given to the impact of the cost of living crisis on parents. Cost of living increases did not register strongly "on the radar" last year and prior to the outbreak of the Russian war against Ukraine.

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?

At this time, ROL is in a precarious position. After 2 years without meaningful work with schools, ROL providers face significant challenges: a reduction in the number of specialist outdoor educators, disruption in everything from customers to supply chains, the after-effects of insurance problems leading to uncertainty among some of those returning.

While many teachers are keen to return and are doing so, there are still a large number of teachers yet to return with their schools. The result of this disruption is on-going financial pressure for the not-for-profit organisations that deliver most residential experiences. The effects of any injection of funding in any particular age-group must be considered in relation to current trading.

Over decades, the proportion of primary and secondary schools attending has varied but in recent years, the greater number of schools attending ROL is from primary schools. Numbers of Secondary Schools have diminished for seemingly a variety of reasons. Focusing support on secondaries would be seeking to reverse a trend but it is far from clear what the barriers are to secondary teachers bringing groups. It is uncertain that financial support will benefit secondary students at this time.

On the other hand, Primary schools remain active and positive about residential and may welcome financial support for parents. Focusing on primaries would be like pushing at an open door. Many have a continuous history of attending residential (some over 20 years) and young participants and their parents look forward to pupils following their siblings. Primary teachers are used to engaging in their schools' residential. Primary teachers who often change the year group they teach, are used to taking their turn and sharing the load of a residential.

At this time, the main concern is the impact on trading due to the increase in the cost of living. It is largely parents who 'foot the bill' for their child's residential and many are experience growing financial pressures. An increasing number will be unable to afford the costs of a residential and tightening of available income means major choices are being made, for example some parents who could afford a residential, might prefer to spend their money on a family holiday.

As the number of young people available to go on residential reduces due to the cost of living crisis, there is a risk the class will breach a critical number beyond which supporting funds cannot be raised. With a greater percentage of young people unable to attend, teachers will be reluctant to go ahead perhaps on equity grounds and the unfairness of some children left in school; perhaps due to the increase workload on colleagues left to look those remaining in school.

As we seek to re-establish ROL on a sustainable, long-term basis, it may help to consider pathways for young people. Scottish Government has put a lot into early years, outdoor learning. Focusing support on upper primary will secure the residential as a milestone event and through continuity and progression, will build on early years experiences and school based outdoor learning. It is known that some pupils engaged in forest nurseries and progressed to primaries that do not go outdoors at all. There are negativities from starting and stopping outdoor learning in a child's school career.

At a time when parents will struggle more, and the sector is seeking to stabilise, focusing support on upper primaries may increase the likelihood of success. Conversely, effort to support secondary schools will struggle, coming as it does from a standing start. There are barriers to teachers taking time out of schools to go on residential. Some may see the residential as a distraction given the strong focus on exam success.

Secondary pupils are often excited by the idea of a residential but some change their mind as the event draws closer. It is possible that more older pupils will go through with the residential, if they have positive memories of a relatively recent residential in primary.

There are two further considerations on the deployment of a fund. Support for young people whose parents cannot afford the residential, and funding to direct toward researching the impacts and benefits of a residential. We can perhaps use conventional metrics, such as free school meals, to identify the numbers.

For schools in areas of deprivation, the add-ons of a residential particularly travel may put the whole trip beyond reach. Some schools have gathered waterproofs and footwear for their pupils to draw on; school new to the residential may not have these resources. It may be necessary for funding to overcome these ancillary obstacles for those from areas of deprivation.

To outdoor education specialists and the teachers who take their pupils on residential, the benefits to pupils are readily apparent. However, benefits are often anecdotal. A great deal can be learned or confirmed about the efficacy of the residential experience and there are strong grounds for capturing. The proposal creates an excellent start point for longitudinal research.

Although it is considered difficult to measure such things as confidence or resilience, it is possible and we need to direct resource to produce measurable impacts of the funding on young people and schools. In addition, there should be intended outcomes (related to CfE for example) but there will also be emergent outcomes. 25 pupils in a class will each come away with several intended and emergent outcomes. Skilled outdoor education specialists and teachers in collaboration with academics will be based placed to capture these important data which are often overlooked.

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.

ROL should be wholly inclusive. There is no reason for anyone to be excluded from the experience. In support the funding of all children, the Bill goes a long way to ensuring equality. Young people with extreme disability will be better placed going to specialists such as the Calvert Trust. However, we should not underestimate the potential for all young people in mainstream education including those with additional needs, to benefit from a residential experience. They should all be accommodated at an outdoor education centre and benefit from an outdoor activity programme with their peers.

ROL is a powerful pedagogy that can significantly reduce many shortfalls and failings in society. SOEC recognises this and is a wholly inclusive charity. In addition to working with school groups, we offer experiences to groups of young people with additional needs including young people including those with autistic spectrum diagnoses and neurodiversity, with visual impairment, Young Carers, care experienced, groups of different faiths and cultures, and BAME groups.

This focus, in turn, improves the skills of our specialist outdoor educators and ensures a better experience for those visiting with their schools. We know that within schools, ROL can significantly reduce the gap between young people from different socio-economic backgrounds.

Currently in Scotland, all these groups are under-represented in access to, and use of the outdoors for leisure, recreation, sport and work. They are also underrepresented in our profession. SOEC is working to change this. By embedding equity in their residentials, we aim to contribute to creating the foundations for a future of greater engagement with the outdoors.

As proposed in the Bill, funding ROL places goes a long way to improving equity as evidenced by the remarkable outcomes and benefits to young people with additional needs.

Many of the providers pursue different emphases. Over time, and as we rebuild the workforce of specialist outdoor educators, issues related to equity in a broad sense will develop within and increasingly permeate the profession.

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

This has been referred to throughout the document.

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?

SOEC makes a significant contribution to Sustainable Development in many ways. Most young people who come to us are from urban areas; some are constrained to their town or city. SOEC successfully

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introduced thousands of young people to the wider environment and enables them to develop meaningful connection with nature.

This is important. Only if young people consider nature to be relevant, will they be motivated to take action to "save it" in whatever form that might be. Failure to bring children and young people along the sustainable development journey I likely to result in them being pushed into the arms of the climate deniers.

As a charity and social enterprise, we are guided by sustainable development. The integration of economic, social and environmental factors supports our procurement and other purchases.

Sustainability of SOEC is evident from its continued operation over the last 35 years as a charity. Its not-for-profit business model remains viable despite the economic downturn in 2009, and the pandemic in 2020. Despite these setbacks of the last 10 years, SOEC has invested over £2m into its Centres, reduced borrowing from over £1m to £35,000, and provided over 500,000 multi-day learning experiences for over 150,000 children and young people. This has been possible in large part to support of philanthropists, companies, the government and others who wish to support the work we do with young people.

Climate Change is the threat and Sustainable Development is the solution. My generation is leaving a terrible mess for our children to contend with because we have chosen to be slow to react. Our children will not have the luxury of time - they will have to respond and adapt increasingly quickly. The best thing that adults can do at this time, is to take action to help young people to develop the qualities and skills they will need for the future. From extensive experience in residential outdoor learning, we are always astonished at the fabulous way children overcome challenged together. Decision-makers today need to give them more opportunities to prepare for the future. We need to be more ambitious for them to give them the fighting chance they deserve.

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)?

SOEC works with children across Scotland and across all socio-economic groups. From our experience, it is clear that the closer the level of collaboration between the teachers/ group leaders and the outdoor centre staff team, the better the outcomes. This applies to all young participants.

Historically, we sought to work with schools "before, during and after" the residential. However in recent years this has been challenging with teachers have less time to do this work.

Partnership working enables us to understand the challenges faced by particular groups or classes and enables us to be more incisive in our interventions. It enables us to learn from others, and them from us. It also creates important opportunities for joint evaluation from health and well-being as well as CfE outcomes.

This important aspect of the work would benefit from a more formal expectation for example as part of protected time for prior planning and post evaluation (as per working time agreements).

It will also benefit from recognition of residential providers as "other educators" and a greater understanding of the potential for partnership working.

Many documents have recommended partnership working, from the Christie Commission to more recently the Audit Commission. However, while partnership is used among public sector groupings (e.g. it is apparent between councils, government agencies, police, NHS etc.), this is in effect just joined-up government. We should expect this as a minimum.

However, the residential experience will be an excellent example to showcase the potential of partnership working between e.g. schools and providers, councils and other stakeholder. The range of stakeholders in outdoor learning is invigorating. People from different backgrounds collaborating on shared challenges is a great stimulus for innovation. Conversely, to leave decision-making in the hands of one or a few groups risks ossification and narrow mind-sets at a time when we must constantly adapt.

Every month it appears as if some new failing in society is identified and the first choice solution is to

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expect teachers to deal with it. Teachers should not be expected to resolve every societal failure. Pupils expect their teachers to pursue contemporary messages and they are highly receptive when they see third-party endorsement of it by other trusted adults. If specialist outdoor educator are recognised as "other educators", they become important allies for teachers. SOECs mission is to inspire and empower young people to develop the qualities and skills they need but our purpose is to support teachers and schools.

ROL supports and delivers across many Government policies and priorities. It is a major contributor to sustainable development, contributing positively to:

- economic (preparing young people for the future workforce; encouraging receptivity to new ideas and decision-making among young people);
- societal (e.g. health and well-being, mental health, mental toughness, sport and leisure); and
- environmental dimensions (enabling young people to make meaningful connection to the natural world, making it relevant and interesting to young people most of whom are constrained to urban environments.

This complexity is a fabulous opportunity but it also a threat as it is easy for e.g. different departments to leave it to someone else. In recent years, Education Scotland has backed away from engaging with ROL. It is understandable that it wishes to focus on teachers but not that it should ignore a major adjunct to education. Will multiple departments recognise the contribution of ROL to their policies, or will ROL be recognised as a major part of Education with Education Scotland taking the lead with input from other departments?

The proposed funding should not lead to the establishment of a "pop-up industry." Clear lessons can be taken from the limitations of NCIS and their unrealistic and depleting funding model must be avoided. Third Sector ROL is a profession re-emerging from the pandemic and it should benefit from the funding to ensure that the Bill meets its aim, of providing for all children and young people.