



## Proposed Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill

Liz Smith, Mid Scotland and Fife, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party

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

### A response by the Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education (SAPOE)

#### SAPOE

The Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education aims to:

- Support Local Authorities and partners in the development of Outdoor Learning as part of Curriculum for Excellence
- Promote and develop consistent good practice across Scotland for off-site visits through the implementation of [Going Out There](#)
- Support the provision of Adventure Activities and residential Outdoor Centres

We do this through:

- Working in partnership with Scottish Government and Education Scotland on matters relating to Outdoor Learning including adventure activities
- Working in partnership with the Health and Safety Executive and Adventure Activities Licensing Authority on matters relating to the safe delivery of outdoor activities
- Maintaining the Going Out There website on behalf of Scottish Government
- Having representation on several national bodies relating to outdoor learning
- Identifying and promoting good practice in outdoor learning
- Offering informed and authoritative advice on outdoor learning at both local and national level
- Providing training opportunities to support the delivery of OL at all levels

SAPOE comprises a wide membership formed from local authority representatives, associate members, partners and honorary members. This provides significant breadth and depth of knowledge, skills and experiences to champion, support and shape outdoor learning across Scotland.

#### Formal response from SAPOE

SAPOE welcomes national dialogue and consultation regarding the future of outdoor learning.

The Membership discussed this proposed Bill at a recent meeting in June 2022. Feedback was collated and discussed by the SAPOE Executive.

At this stage of the process, SAPOE considers it most appropriate to provide a response to the first question: ***Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposed Bill?***

The Panel is committed to a progressive range of sustainable outdoor learning experiences including:

- maximising the routine and regular use of local contexts (onsite school grounds and offsite locally) at different levels to add progression, depth and totality of experiences;
- day visits to explore local areas in more depth and to access provision and environments further afield; and
- occasional high quality residential visits carefully planned as part of the school curriculum to build on prior learning and support future outcomes.

These components are complementary and should be appropriately resourced and supported without detriment to each other. Schools and local authorities should consider how to deliver education effectiveness, equity, equality and environmental sustainability when creating a progressive programme of outdoor learning experiences. A progressive approach covering all components is supported by various Curriculum for Excellence resources, although its implementation can be varied across Scotland and so should be a focus for national policy makers i.e. not just residential visits in isolation.

In answer to question one, SAPOE is '**neutral**' at this stage. SAPOE welcomes national debate and discussion about outdoor learning but has provided this response for the following reasons:

- It is important to consider curriculum outdoor learning in its entirety, rather than one part/component in isolation. This ensures that schools, local authorities, partners and Scottish Government can review holistically the opportunities and risks across all types of experiences. Updated national guidance can then be delivered to ensure schools deliver high quality progressive experiences.
- There is insufficient detail at this stage for SAPOE to be reassured that implementation of this Bill would not be to the detriment of other components detailed above, including supporting the frequent and effective use of schools' grounds and local resources. There is a risk that resources may be redeployed/diverted to delivering a discrete statutory requirement, whilst any new resources could be targeted on improving other aspects of outdoor learning; not just residential.

SAPOE is therefore focused at this stage on how any proposed Bill regarding residential visits in isolation will impact on outdoor learning as a whole. SAPOE therefore believes a wider discussion is necessary on how best to deploy existing and any new resources via updated outdoor learning guidance to ensure high quality progression in all types of outdoor learning experiences.

SAPOE is reassured this consultation is requesting views on specific aspects including scope, funding, quality framework, appropriate ages, equality, and protecting and enhancing the environment. These do need to be considered very carefully. SAPOE believes any updated or new guidance should always include an equity of provision to all Scottish children and young people, including those in the independent sector.

Contexts vary across Scotland, for example, rural island local authorities compared to urban local authorities. Introducing updated national outdoor learning guidance and associated resources which empower each local authority (for local authority-run schools) to consider and incorporate their own contexts, priorities and stakeholder views via existing strategic tools may be the most effective approach and create even better outcomes for children and young people across Scotland. This for example would allow a local authority to consider the most appropriate age range in consultation with their school communities. Whilst it is accepted some children and young people move across authority boundaries, this may be a more appropriate best-fit solution rather than a prescriptive age limit.

### **Moving forward**

SAPOE is committed to being engaged in any future work in this area. Its membership will provide a high quality resource for further consultation and development.

SAPOE provides consent for this response to be attributed to the organisation (SAPOE).