

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar [Bil Addysg Awyr Agored Breswyl \(Cymru\)](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) on the [Residential Outdoor Education \(Wales\) Bill](#)

ROE 07

Ymateb gan: Cymdeithas Genedlaethol yr Ysgolfeistri ac Undeb yr Athrawesau (NASUWT)

Response from: The National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)

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1. The NASUWT welcomes the opportunity to consult upon the Private Members Bill Residential Outdoor Learning.
2. NASUWT – The Teachers’ Union represents teachers and headteachers in Wales and across the United Kingdom.

### GENERAL COMMENTS

3. The NASUWT welcomes the proposals contained in the Private Members Bill Residential Outdoor Learning as this brings a focus to key elements of inequity in accessing this provision for all pupils in Wales. The NASUWT feels that this Private Members Bill is raising debate on residential outdoor learning, outdoor learning as a pedagogical approach to be embedded in the daily practice in schools, and in delivering the Curriculum for Wales.
4. The NASUWT has noted the barrier of finance, which gives rise to inequity in accessing this Residential Outdoor Learning for all children in Wales, but would also raise further considerations of a) other structural barriers, and b) the need for any Residential Outdoor Learning to be firmly linked to a framework of outdoor learning delivery, if it is to achieve the benefits claimed in the Private Bill proposals.
5. The NASUWT notes that Estyn did not submit data on the current level of outdoor learning delivery in schools in Wales, we currently have no knowledge of the number of hours devoted to this learning delivery, nor of the nature (i.e. on school site, local community partners, forest schools, field trips) or effectiveness. The NASUWT would recommend that Welsh

Government undertake exploration of current delivery, and develop a workable framework which would incorporate near and remote (residential outdoor learning) opportunities.

Children and Young Peoples Education Committee.

Call for Evidence January 19<sup>th</sup> 2021.

**Question 1. The general principles of the Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill and the need for legislation to deliver the stated policy intention;**

6. The Explanatory memorandum makes explicit the intention of the bill is to address fairness, equality, and social justice. It states that this is to fulfil the UNCRC rights to an education which develops a child's personality, talents and abilities to the fullest possible. It further states that Residential Outdoor Education is widely understood as offering a range of benefits that can enhance children's and young peoples lives, but due to poverty and disadvantage is not accessible to a significant proportion of the Welsh population.<sup>ii</sup>
7. This disadvantage is further recognised by children themselves. Children were highly concerned about not being able to go on these trips, and acutely aware of their own situation in not being able to go.<sup>iii</sup>
8. In the consultation 93% of responders' identified finance as the biggest barrier to inclusion.<sup>iv</sup>
9. Evolve data indicates that 2022/23 2/3rds of Welsh primary schools and middle schools organised an outdoor educational residential. For secondary and middle this was just over half for years 7 to 9, and just less than half for years 10 to 11.<sup>v</sup>

10. Financial and other costs constraints were cited in the bill consultation as the biggest barrier, echoed in the OEAP survey.<sup>vi</sup>
11. In Scotland outdoor learning was made mandatory in 2010, by 2019 72% of primary children had outdoor learning experience. In England 2019 the comparable figure was 42%. This supports the effectiveness of the Bills proposals of making an offer of residential outdoor education both mandatory and fully funded by the state.<sup>vii</sup>
12. There is no dispute on the disparity of access to outdoor education residential experiences, where disadvantaged children have poor access.
13. It is also not in dispute that legislation which gives a mandatory provision for this experience to be accessible, and which also allocates Welsh Government funding to ensure its delivery, in a large measure would address this lack of accessibility to outdoor residential education experiences.
14. To a certain degree it could be said to address equality, fairness, and social justice in this access. But funding alone may not be the sole barrier to equity in accessing residential experiences, or outdoor learning experiences generally. There are cultural and equalities barriers to accessing this specific world of outdoor adventure and conservation in the Western world, which are not explored in this Bill. Legislation on funding provision alone also does not contribute to embedding the learning from the experience. Stand-alone, one-off events do not provide continuity nor link with and consolidate learning alongside the curriculum delivery in day to day education. These questions will be explored later.

**Question 2. Whether there are any unintended consequences arising from the Bill.**

15. There was a concern expressed in the consultation that if this bill as enacted it may generate a rise in profit-based companies flooding the field. There is a need to ensure that standards are adhered to in the provision of outdoor education in residential settings. The LOtC quality award has been endorsed by Welsh Government. This award also may need re-assessing against other equalities issues raised later in this contribution.<sup>viii</sup>
16. The cost-of-living crisis is continuing to have impact and is unpredictable in further future impact. The working poor are deeply affected by this crisis. Some comments in the consultation suggested a more targeted approach to provision using proxies of attaching funding to the PDG or FSM. This approach would exclude the working poor and aggravate further inequalities already in existence.
17. It is notable that there are two groups not included in these provisions as the Bill is currently designed. These are pupils in PRU, and those educated otherwise than in maintained schools (home schooling). This would bring into play further inequalities if not addressed as the bill develops.

“Mandated and funded provision of outdoor learning experience through residential options may have the effect of reducing contact with other available outdoor learning experiences in and near schools, and prevent the building of partnerships with other local provision. The school day is busy with curriculum-based learning, more obviously contributing to achievement targets, and opportunities for further development may be lost through emphasis on this residential provision. Research identifies a progression approach to reaping the benefits of outdoor learning, from near and on site, to more remote

outdoor experiences, and including clear pre and post experience preparation and reflection, whilst linking with the curriculum objectives”.<sup>ix</sup>

18. The Bill proposes a stand-alone provision. This does not provide an embedded learning, nor a learning through progression from local familiar places to more remote challenging terrain. The Bill does not explicitly state how the learning will be linked to other curriculum objectives, nor long term attitudinal changes in children and young people.

19. When museum charges became free, this did not result in previously non-participating children and families taking up the offer, but in more frequent visits from the middle-class families already benefiting from accessing this cultural experience. This same phenomenon may transfer to this offer of free outdoor education residential experience if a) not embedded through progression of experience, and b) not addressing other cultural barriers to accessibility.

20. Without embedded outdoor learning, occasional outdoor learning remains vulnerable to funding and policy changes.

**Question 3. Any potential barriers to the implementation of the Bill’s provisions and whether the Bill and accompanying Explanatory Memorandum and Regularly Impact Assessment takes account of them (including commencement and the United Kingdom Internal Market Act);**

21. There is a wealth of research in this area, and most cite finance as the most significant barrier to engagement and participation in outdoor education in a residential setting. The extent of barriers to access for different groups of disadvantaged children and young people need more unpacking to understand the full impact of these barriers.

22. Child and parental anxiety are referenced as a potential barrier. This may arise through poor mental health, or through the complete lack of familiarity of the offer of residential outdoor education. Such barriers may be addressed by a more embedded approach to outdoor learning generally in schools, with a whole school approach, and every subject designed to include some outdoor learning as a key pedagogical element, for an increased familiarity. Clear communication pre and post the experience would also help address this barrier. It may also benefit the accessibility of the provision if extra skilled staff were available to provide emotional support for children experiencing anxiety.
23. The nature of ALN needs can be widely diverse, these needs could be addressed by provision already made under the LOtC quality award (an award for premises offering outdoor educational programmes for children and young people). But further exploration of how these centres identify and understand the specific needs of children, for e.g. for whom extreme noise, crowds or bright lights, and appropriate provision made. The needs of individual children are very specific. This could have an unintended impact on the work of the ALN Coordinator in schools.
24. The residential provision needs to naturally link with their home environment, to enable lasting impact on their attitudes to the natural environment. How this Bill supports this link is not made clear. There is a need to develop further what teachers need, to do this well. In a three-year project of a locally run forest school, a child describes how they now go outside more often and take their friends to the park – the length of this project was key to the child’s transfer of their learning and experience to their home setting. The outdoor residential offer needs to link strongly with other more local long-term provision. x

25. Addressing structural and cultural barriers is a monumental task. A focus only on finance will not provide the social justice the Bill is aiming to address. But without addressing these aspects children and young people will still express non-engagement with outdoor learning, and not evidence a long-term change in attitude to the natural environment, which the residential offer claims.
26. It is notable on reading research evidence on outdoor learning, that the solution to the problem of both inequity and social justice, and increasing contact with the natural environment, is identified according to the ethos of the organisation where the practitioners is engaged. A residential provider identifies experiences afforded by natural lakes, rivers, mountains as an escape from urban and screen heavy lifestyles. Whilst organisations focussing on relationships of people with the natural environments tend to position communities as an integral part of the natural green environment. Here local access through green spaces, community gardens, nature reserves etc offered outdoor learning and fostered a continued relationships with the natural environment.<sup>xi</sup>
27. Finance is not the only barrier to engagement identified in the research, nor by children. There are powerful forces that mediate the experience for children and young people. If the norms of the young people run counter to the messaging or packaging of outdoor residential experience, then children and young people will not engage.
28. Inequality of income does impact badly; it is more than having the cost of appropriate clothing. A child described this as creating their own inbuilt denier to going on trips ‘ if I want to do something... somewhere outside but it costs money, so then I couldn’t do it, because my parents were like ‘ well if we pay for that we won’t pay for the bills’.<sup>xii</sup>

29. Specifics like laundry can be an additional cost which creates a culture of not engaging with the natural environment, a mother described this as ‘the reason she couldn’t let her children go to the park was because she could barely afford to do the laundry once a week, so she could not let them get dirty’. This then creates a culture of non-engagement with the natural environment for the child. This can be further exacerbated by societal judgements on certain groups e.g. travellers, or families engaged with social services where cleanliness can become a proxy for good parenting. ‘.. there is a feeling that if I let my kids be outside that I am being a bad parent, I should be having them at home, sitting quiet doing their homework and not getting into trouble’. (Ibid).
30. There are entrenched assumptions about what engaging with nature is, which can play against engagement with outdoor learning. There is a white British thing about outdoor adventure and conservation, where doing other things in nature does not count e.g. having a picnic or sport. There can a lack of match with everyday experience of children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, which creates a clash with the cultural expectations of the outdoor programme.<sup>xiii</sup>
31. In a micro analysis this lack of match can be as personal and individual as the understanding of a first generation immigrant from the Indian sub continent, where walking is associated with poverty, why would this child want to be walking, when culturally they are told they have escaped that.
32. Disadvantaged children also feel this activity/experience is not for them as they don’t see themselves as visible in the natural environment. ‘People think it’s not for me because they see being outside and doing the nature activities on the pictures that come up on Facebook, they’re not poor, and they’re not black, and you can tell that pretty quickly’. Invitations to participate needs to come from someone who represent their own lives – word of mouth is really important. ‘the outdoor sector is very middle class, and very white, able bodied and male’. <sup>xiv</sup>



33. There is still a lack of diversity among staff, particularly among outdoor adventure and conservation backgrounds, this is different to the local community focussed providers. Literally the involvement of a neighbour makes these more accessible to children and young people. Seeing yourself in the face of others affects engagement.
34. These cultural experiences of disadvantaged children and young people are important as willingness to participate is related to previous experience of the natural environment, early involvement progresses to more involvement when older. Slow burn and low-cost solutions may be more sustainable. Building up partnerships with community groups providing this experience locally is crucial for an embedded approach to sustainable outdoor learning. The current Bill does not include or capitalise on this embedded placement of outdoor learning.
35. Other structural barriers to schools working with outdoor learning and linking the learning for residential experience are barriers identified in the research as teacher training, confident staff, and how to link the curriculum with outside learning. Some research identified a culture of unwillingness in schools to improve the provision of outdoor learning due to H&S and teacher time. Outdoor learning can bring unanticipated learning outcomes, this can be hard to then link with specific subject curriculum objectives. Resources are needed to assist the mapping of these learning outcomes onto the curriculum.
36. Lack of funding can be a barrier to outdoor learning if externally provided but if embedded within day-to-day educational practice, and is happening in or near school, the cost is minimal. For long term attitudinal change progression is crucial from more familiar to more remote and extraordinary remote experiences. For embedding the learning, links to community projects are seen as important.<sup>xv</sup>

37. There is a need to identify how to overcome specific barriers in a logical sequence appropriate to their context.
- Cultural and material barriers.
  - Senior leadership crucial to embed.
  - Awareness raising for policy makers and practitioners.
  - Building infrastructure for outdoor learning that is accessible and affordable.
  - Links to local communities important. This would support changing mindset more than funding.
  - Dillon and Dickie 2012, comment that for disadvantaged children wellbeing through outdoor learning is important for improving school readiness and achievement.<sup>xvi</sup> Attendance is also improved. Scotland's experience supports this comment.

38. Welsh Government includes outdoor learning as a key feature of effective learner centred pedagogy, citing how this links with the four purposes:

- High levels of wellbeing, confidence, and engagement.
- Social emotional, spiritual, and physical development.
- Authentic opportunities for learners to develop and consolidate cross curricular skills. Development of imagination, creativity, and curiosity
- Empathy for the environment, showing an awareness of their impact on the world.
- Ability to assess and experience risk, helping others to develop resilience and confidence.

These can be supported by a range of outdoor learning opportunities.

39. The range of outdoor learning and educational gains identified by research:

Forest schools	Creative and self regulated learners.
Filed studies	Care for others and the environment
Embedded on site curriculum learning	Creative and self regulated learning
Outdoor and adventure	Social, confident and connected
School gardening	Care for others and the environment
Early years outdoor activity	Healthy lives and positive lifestyles
Visits to nature reserves	Care for others and the environments
Visits to national parks	Care for others and the environment.

(Waite, S. Where Are We Going? International Views on Purposes, Practices and Barriers in School-Based Outdoor Learning.

*Educ.Sci.* 2020, 10(11),311; <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci10110311>)

40. NRW comment:

‘ Well constructed and well planned outdoor learning helps develop the skills of enquiry, critical thinking, and reflection necessary form our children and young people to meet the social, economic, and environmental challenges of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Outdoor learning connects children and young people with the natural world, with our built heritage, and our culture and society, and encourages lifelong involvement and activity in ... the outdoors’. NRW recommend highlighting all areas of the curriculum that could be delivered in the outdoors in all curriculum literature’. xvii

41. Matilda Miles Council for Learning Outside the Classroom supports this: ‘learning outside the classroom has maximum impact when it is woven into the school curriculum and daily teaching practice’. <sup>xviii</sup>
42. Embedding learning outside the classroom in natural environments into teaching is supported when delivery is tailored to meet the individual school needs, has senior leadership support, is regulatory monitored and evaluated, and when teacher knowledge and confidence and skills are developed.
43. Estyn commented that outdoor education needs to be considered in a wider context than just residential, outdoor learning needs embedding. Estyn also commented that many of the benefits of residential outdoor experiences can be gained through day visits and through regular visits of the outdoors as a context for learning.<sup>xix</sup> It seems odd Estyn did not have further data on how outdoor learning is currently provided across schools in Wales.
44. Sam Rowlands noted the lack of data on number accessing residential outdoor learning experiences. This is reflected also in the lack of data on how outdoor learning is managed in schools week be week. This would be an avenue of further research.
45. **The NASUWT position:**
- Outdoor education is an important aspect of a broad and balanced curriculum and should form part of an educational offer available to all pupils.
  - We would still advise members not to participate in visits that are non-contractual, do not have clear educational outcomes (as in related to curricula requirements), and do not require the exercise of a teacher’s professional skills and judgement.

- Governing bodies and schools should ensure that any visit should have a specific and stated educational objective, arrangements all comply with all relevant regulations and guidelines, all schools should have an educational visits coordinator (who does not need to be QTS qualified). All venues should be LOfC quality badged as this is very good on how children with ALN needs can be supported. This has been endorsed by Welsh Government and should be emphasised as a condition of participation.
- The thread of the Curriculum for Wales is that curricula should be developed locally and be pertinent and relevant for each individual school. The offer on which this Bill is presented is a one size fits all and does not match the ethos of the CfW, nor the needs of each school.
- Many researchers, and commentators on this Bill have emphasised that the opportunity to access residential experience should not be a one off, but part of a lead up and follow on of activities and learning and complement the curriculum.

#### **Question 4: United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020**

- The United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 is an act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom passed in December 2020. Its purpose is to prevent internal trade barriers within the UK, and to restrict the legislative powers of the devolved administrations in economic matters.
- Senedd enactment of statutory funding for the provisions of outdoor education for all pupils once in their school career: could be interpreted to favour Welsh provision of outdoor education. But on balance if providers from outside Wales take account of language needs there should be no barrier.

**Question 5: Matters relating to the competence of the Senedd including compatibility with the European Convention of Human Rights.**

Implementation of this Bill in accordance with equalities would be better supported by a further exploration of how all children identified as disadvantaged could be supported to access this outdoor learning. Details already given above.

**Question 6: Any matter related to the quality of the legislation.**

The Bill as presented does not include a structured approach to ensure deep embedding of any learning gained from an outdoor residential educational experience. As described above, enhancement of this provision would be supported by the development of a framework ensuring that outdoor learning of near and remote provision were linked, providing for a consolidated approach.

The legislation needs to further relate to what teachers need in terms of resources to support the link to curriculum objectives, and in terms of confidence in this delivery.

Addressing the question of teacher time is also a crucial issue.

- ii <https://senedd.wales/media/1nsjgtqb/outdoor-education-wales-bill-em.pdf>
- iii [https://www.childreninwales.org.uk/application/files/2916/8742/8735/Price\\_of\\_Pupil\\_Poverty\\_En.pdf](https://www.childreninwales.org.uk/application/files/2916/8742/8735/Price_of_Pupil_Poverty_En.pdf)
- iv <https://research.senedd.wales/media/q5ib5qo0/23-29-residential-outdoor-education-bill-bill-summary.pdf>.
- v <https://research.senedd.wales/media/q5ib5qo0/23-29-residential-outdoor-education-bill-bill-summary.pdf> p 12.
- vi <https://business.senedd.wales/documents/s142906/ROE%2003%20Outdoor%20Education%20Advisers%20Panel%20OEP.pdf> p1.
- vii <https://education.gov.scot/media/0fklf35p/hwb24-ol-support.pdf>
- viii <https://www.lotc.org.uk/providers/lotc-quality-badge-2/#:~:text=The%20LOtC%20Quality%20badge%20is,and%20adventure%20centres%2C%20and%20expeditions>
- ix Waite, S. Where Are We Going? International Views on Purposes, Practices and Barriers in School-Based Outdoor Learning. *Educ. Sci.* 2020, 10(11), 311; <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci10110311>
- x McCree et al. The Hare and the Tortoise in Forest School, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2018.1446430>
- xi Waite, S. 2021. It's not for people like (them)': structural and cultural barriers to children and young people engaging with nature outside schooling <https://doi.org/10.1080/14729679.2021.1935286>
- xii Ibid
- xiii Waite 2020 above
- xiv Waite, S. 2021. It's not for people like (them)': structural and cultural barriers to children and young people engaging with nature outside schooling <https://doi.org/10.1080/14729679.2021.1935286>
- xv Waite, S. Where Are We Going? International Views on Purposes, Practices and Barriers in School-Based Outdoor Learning. *Educ. Sci.* 2020, 10(11), 311; <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci10110311>
- xvi Natural England Commissioned Report NECR092 2012)
- xvii <https://naturalresources.wales/media/5627/improving-opportunities-to-access-the-outdoors-for-responsible-recreation-org.pdf>
- xviii <https://educationbusinessuk.net/features/opportunities-learning-beyond-classroom>
- xix [https://www.estyn.gov.wales/system/files/2023-06/Consultation%20on%20the%20Outdoor%20Education%20%28Wales%29%20Bill\\_0.pdf](https://www.estyn.gov.wales/system/files/2023-06/Consultation%20on%20the%20Outdoor%20Education%20%28Wales%29%20Bill_0.pdf)