

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 10

Ymateb gan: Y Gynghair Cefn Gwlad (Cymru)

Response from: Countryside Alliance (Wales)

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1. The Countryside Alliance firmly supports outdoor education and the purposes of this Bill in promoting it. Our efforts to provide opportunities for predominantly urban schools to give their pupils an experience of angling, through our Fishing for Schools programme, would be greatly enhanced by a presumption that all children will be able to experience at least a week's residential outdoor education at some point in their school career.
2. Outdoor education opportunities represent an invaluable, potentially transformative contribution to a child's learning and personal growth. They foster practical knowledge, skills and resilience in the face of challenges, none of which could be successfully replicated in the confines of the classroom. This is especially true for children whose personal and family circumstances do not otherwise permit them to engage in outdoor pursuits, a form of inequality that this Bill is well positioned to address.
3. In addition to the individual benefits to participating children this Bill stands to fulfil a broader social purpose. We are concerned that there currently exists a gulf in understanding as to the realities of the countryside between those who live and work in it and people brought up in urban environments, which has fuelled prejudice against essential rural activities. Addressing this is a legitimate and necessary purpose of public education. Facilitating outdoor education would do so by giving all children the opportunity to experience life in the natural environment directly and stimulating surrounding discussion and thought, thereby promoting social accord throughout Wales.

4. Wales enjoys a vibrant and thriving outdoor education sector that attracts visits from across the United Kingdom. Although the Bill does not stipulate that the courses of residential outdoor education it prescribes must be held in Wales, its attractiveness to external audiences strongly suggests that the domestic sector would benefit greatly. It would in turn stimulate sectoral growth, further confirming Wales as a destination of choice for outdoor education and increasing revenues of both public and private funds into the Welsh rural economy.
5. We would ask the Committee to consider what steps might be taken in implementing this Bill to ensure that children do not miss out on an opportunity to participate in outdoor education. For instance, if a child aged 14 moves from a school that routinely offers the opportunity at age 15 to one that offers it at 13, a rigid age-based implementation would see him or her fall into a gap. The Residential Outdoor Education Code, as prescribed in this Bill, should make clear that the requirement to offer the opportunity attaches to each individual child, and that schools must be flexible enough in their offers to fulfil it.
6. Otherwise, we have no concerns as to the capacity of the Bill or the ministerial powers it establishes to achieve its policy intention.