

ROE 22

Ymateb gan: Y Cerddwyr

Response from: Ramblers Cymru



F.A.O Children, Young people and Education Committee

19th January 2024

## Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill

Ramblers Cymru are the guardians of the path network in Wales, protecting the places we all love to walk and helping everyone enjoy the outdoors on foot. We work to ensure our green links continue to provide access to nature and that our path network tells the stories of Wales, its history and its vibrant culture. We have thousands of active volunteers and members across Wales who support each other to go walking, and who help protect and improve path networks and green spaces.

### General Principles

We fully support the aims and objectives of the Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill. It aligns well with our vision and mission in Wales because it will help lay the foundations for a lifelong enjoyment of outdoor recreation. Giving all children and young people an early opportunity to experience the outdoors through a residential will enhance opportunities for future generations to live healthier, happier lives.

The explanatory memorandum clearly highlights the benefits of residential outdoor education, and the benefits of outdoor activities more broadly. It also shows that provision is inconsistent and that financial constraints are a factor in many children missing out on these experiences. We support addressing this inconsistency and inequity through legislation as the most effective way to achieve the policy intent.

### Subordinate legislation and the statutory code

The delivery of outdoor education opportunities for all children would allow us to showcase paths and outdoor spaces and the potential they offer us all throughout our lives. It would be an opportunity to explain the nature of public access rights, in an age appropriate way, and lay the foundations of more confident, capable, curious individuals.

Our research tells us that adults in Wales have a skills and confidence gap when it comes to making the most of our wonderful networks of paths and our expanses of open access land. We would want any statutory code to support future generations to be better informed by including provision for two important educational opportunities for every child:



- to embed an awareness and understanding of what rights of way and open access networks are, and how they are a resource they can use and enjoy throughout their lives
- to embed an understanding of responsible and safe behaviours, including the countryside code.

### **Unintended consequences (positive)**

The experiences offered through the residential trips, will no doubt often utilise public rights of way and open spaces. We would hope that the increased demand for more outdoor experiences would give fresh impetus to resolve issues on the path network, in order to facilitate better quality access to more places.

Outdoor providers and landowners could collaborate to provide new or improved access to suitable activity sites, and by doing so, improve access for local residents and visitors alike. The forthcoming Sustainable Farming Scheme could help cover the costs of these enhancements from the proposed 'optional actions' payments.

### **Financial Implications**

Assessing the validity of the costings outlined in the regulatory impact assessment is not within our area of expertise, but we would urge due consideration to be given to the wider economic benefits and opportunities the Bill presents. In particular, the value of walking tourism, which is worth around £2.9bn to Wales each year (much of which flows to rural communities). This Bill could act as a catalyst to improve outdoor access, not only for young people, but for visitors and local people too.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Brough', written in a cursive style.

Rebecca Brough **Policy and Advocacy Manager**

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