

P-05-1135 Targeted funding for residential outdoor education centres, now unable to operate for 12 months, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 29.03.21

We are pleased to hear that the Government has begun to listen to our situation and support what is a very educationally valuable and viable sector. The announcement of a sector specific fund for residential outdoor education is welcomed and I thank you for your time in addressing this matter on our behalf.

The statement communicates that further details of the fund will not be available until May. With the sector being diverse this does leave organisations wondering whether they will be eligible, how the funds will be allocated and how this will support them going forward. Clearly with 8 of 41 centres in Wales already closed permanently because they have not been able to bridge the gap until they can reopen this is a very time critical period. I would be pleased if you were able to shed any further light to this situation for centres that will by May have been closed for a full 14 months.

Furthermore, the announcement also came last week that the DfE have changed their guidance on school visits and that residential school visits should be allowed no earlier than 17th May. It could be the case that after having waited for 14 months centres like ours will now not be eligible for the fund if they are indeed open and able to trade. I would urge the Government to consider the 5 months in 2020 that residential centres were unable to trade yet remained financially unsupported and also the "start up costs" that are now faced after the long period of closure.

I thank you again for your time.