

By email

15th September 2023

Dear Sam,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on your proposed Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill.

While our experience and evidence regarding residential outdoor education might be limited, I am enthusiastic about the potential benefits it presents. I strongly believe in the transformative power of education and recognise that the natural environment plays a crucial role in the holistic development of individuals, especially children and young people. Future trends show how society and technological breakthroughs will drive demand for skills such as creativity, problem-solving and communication, which are difficult to automate. Businesses report that communication, listening and problem-solving are more crucial when recruiting school-leavers than qualifications.

This is in line with recommendations in the Future Generations Report 2020 which called on Welsh Government to stop, "Valuing traditional knowledge-based qualifications over softer skills like creativity, problem-solving and communication." And to start: "Finding ways to place eco-literacy at the centre of education and lifelong learning." We recommended that all Public Bodies (including Welsh Government): "Recognise the different skill sets that we will need to meet our targets to reduce carbon emissions and exploit opportunities in a 'green' and circular economy; with renewable energy, less waste and more responsible businesses."

The new curriculum for Wales provides a framework that emphasises the relevance of real-world experiences. The concept of outdoor residential education perfectly aligns with this, offering young people the chance to immerse themselves in nature, understand the environment better, and cultivate the qualities of resilience, teamwork, and self-discovery. We are especially excited about how the new curriculum's pillars of health and well-being, expressive arts, humanities, and science and technology can provide opportunities to engage young people in nature, in line with the Prosperous, Thriving Welsh Language and Vibrant Culture, and Resilient Wales national well-being goals.

Moreover, I note the Bill's principle of ensuring equal access and fairness to all children. I firmly share the view that every young person, regardless of their socio-economic background, should have the opportunity to connect with nature and reap the personal development and life skills that come along with such experiences.

I welcome the efforts made in the Bill to align with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. However, as the Bill develops further, please note the following considerations.

As the Bill is an amendment to existing law, I would recommend including references to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and to Wales' National Well-being Goals in the Explanatory Notes accompanying the Bill, in particular in the section explaining the purpose of the Bill. I can see that many of the Bill's ambitions would contribute to several of the goals as flagged above. However, it would be good to see these connections

clearly made as well as how the proposals maximise their impact across all of the goals. Repeating the fact that Welsh Ministers would need to use the Well-being of Future Generations Act to develop the proposed guidance would be a useful reminder.

I also would welcome in the Explanatory Memorandum, a clear indication of how the proposed Bill would integrate with other programmes of work within Government which is crucial to follow the integration way of working in the Well-being of Future Generations Act and to provide coherence and coordination in the implementation of the Bill.

I hope you will find my comments useful, and I will follow with interest the Senedd's continued scrutiny and discussions of this Bill. If my Office can be of any further assistance, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,



Derek Walker
Future Generations Commissioner for Wales