

## **Cross-Party Group (CPG) for the Outdoor Activity Sector in Wales**

### **Meeting #8**

**Date & Time:** Thursday 14th December 2023, 10:00 - 12:00

**Venue:** The Summit Centre, The Old Drift Mine, Trelewis, Treharis, CF46 6RD (and online)

#### Attendees in-person

Sam Rowlands – Chair; Paul Donovan - Secretariat & WATO; Rebecca Brough - Secretariat - & Ramblers Cymru; Graham French - Bangor University & AHOEC; Gareth Rogers - Senedd Research Team; Paul Renfro - PCF & WATO; Rachel Cilliers - Rock UK; Kerrie Gemmill - Scouts Cymru; Eben Muse – BMC; Andy Meek - AHOEC & Storey Arms OEC; Rhys Thomas (Sam Rowlands); Phil Stone - Canoe Wales

#### Attendees online

Emma Edwards-Jones - Snowdonia Active & WATO; Dave Harvey - Outdoor Learning Consultant  
Kate Ashbrook – OSS; Simon Patton – MTC; Catherine Williams - Snowdonia-Active & WATO; Alison Roberts – NRW; Chris Pierce - AHOEC & Woodlands OEC; Tom Carrick – BMC; Dave MacCullum – NRW; Steph Price - DoE; WCfOL; David Boden - British Association of Shooting & Conservation; Tom Davies & Gerallt Owen

#### Apologies Received

Paul Frost – TOP; Paul Airey – TOP; Tracey Evans – TOP; Mark Jones – TOP; Lun Roberts - IOL  
Steve Rayner - SWOAPG & WATO; James Hodges - Rock UK; Tom Sharp – WSA; Gwenda Owen - Cycling UK; Sue Williams - NRW & WCfOL; Helen Donnan – BHS; Dawn Thomas - IOL; Gethin Thomas - BCA-QMA, Steven Morgan - Plas Menai & Cefin Campbell - MS

### **Welcome, Introductions, Apologies & Opening Remarks**

The Chair welcomed attendees, confirmed minutes had been circulated and the action arising from last meeting had been completed.

In relation to presentation on the Outdoor Education Bill, SR clarified clear separation with role as the presenter of the Private member bill and role of Chair of the Cross-party group.

### **Presentation 1:**

#### **Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill**

#### **Dave Harvey, Graham French & Gareth Rogers**

The background and status of the Bill were outlined: 2 years of preparation, consultation, development leading to the Bill being introduced to Senedd November 2023.

The ethos of the Bill fits wide range of WG agendas, including the approach taken by the new curriculum for Wales, and moves from outdoor education as enrichment to entitlement.

Sector surveys have provided a good base for understanding sector capacity and support needs. Plenty of positive comments at Senedd discussions regarding the intentions of the Bill, with concerns mostly focused on costs.

Explanatory memorandum gives context of current provision, benefits, consultation findings, policy fit and evidence of why Bill is needed. Of note are addressing the long-term inequality of outcomes, and future growth of participation in outdoors and the sector itself. (The Explanatory Memorandum can be [read here](#) )

The Bill is now in Stage 1 scrutiny. The Children and Young People committee are the main scrutiny committee. Their open consultation runs until 19<sup>th</sup> January, and stakeholder evidence sessions are underway. They will report by the end of March 2024. The Finance committee, and the Legislation, Justice and constitution committee are also considering the Bill.

Committee scrutiny will be followed by a Senedd debate on general principles, informed by the committee reports, followed by a vote April 2024.

If Bill passes to the next stages of amendments and a final vote, the Government must table a financial resolution (within 6 months) without that, the Bill will fall. If vote is 50/50 the Bill will continue (the presiding officer's casting vote is made in favour).

Discussions are taking place between SR and government ministers regarding practicalities and intentions of the bill, and the competing budgetary pressures.

Sector can support by responding to the consultation; inviting MSs to join activities or visit centres, supporting each other's campaigns around the outdoors (e.g. Scouts campaign.) Post Christmas period will be crucial for pushing campaign action.

It was raised that the regional economy/tourism sector is not yet fully engaged in making link with outdoor education provision as a tourism activity. Further conversations needed, including through forums like the Cross-Party Group on Tourism.

Also discussed that this is Wales 'opportunity to step forward and lead – there is international interest from outdoor education sector in the progress of this Bill.

SR thanked members for their support and reiterated the potential transformational effects for pupils, the wellbeing effects, and positive economic and tourism impacts.

## **Presentation 2:**

### **Economic & Social Evaluation of the Outdoor Activity Sector in Wales - next steps.....**

#### **Paul Renfro: Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum & Wales Adventure Tourism Organisation**

Highlighted links between Bill and future inclination and participation in outdoor activity sector, and the positive economic and social impacts to Wales.

Some of the key outcomes and findings included:

- Research has set a baseline to enable a strategic plan for adventure tourism sector.
- Sector has shown growth and change (since 2014 survey) with striking findings for the mental health benefits as motivator for 99% of people's participation. The sector is delivering important mental health and wellbeing outcomes (value of £26.5m for Wales)
- Wales has positive reputation for delivering high visitor satisfaction.

- Economic impact of £272.87m annually; £205m stays in Wales – key part of foundational economy.
- 31K jobs supported/ 21% of tourism and visitors stay longer, spend more, behave appropriately.
- Estimated the Residential Outdoor Education Bill could generate an additional £9.9m – £13.6 m additional spend, around 70% of which would stay in Wales.
- 10% more participation would add £187m social value.

[Click here](#) for the full report.

It was highlighted that this term's Private Members Bill is Mental Health Bill, introduced to Senedd yesterday, which may present opportunities linked to this wellbeing value research.

Development of a strategic plan for adventure tourism sector, to support and deliver more benefits across more priorities. Need to have an industry led approach to reducing skills gap within businesses and stabilise the current offer; clear pathway into sector with appropriate skills, including lifelong learning, health outcomes, etc.; support role of providers in sustainable and responsible tourism; more effective strategic sector development in line with wider priority areas, for example economy, health, lifelong learning benefits.

Discussion points included:

- How the sector links with schools for work experience / qualifications/ careers promotion; Some of this happens, but not currently supported widely through formal structures, often led by individual business links. Recent developments include new Agored Cymru level 3 qualifications (developed by sector employers) and although some links are in place, there is lots of potential to build and embed the new qualifications. No specific apprenticeships at present, and work experience can be challenging, due to health and safety concerns, but there is potential for more links in local areas, and a need for a more structured approach to promoting opportunities to young people.
- Increased focus on green careers pathways, including through lottery funding and volunteering pathways, which may be useful in this area.
- Consideration of the merit of breaking down value of different adventure activities – this could be possible but needs resources to commission the analysis.
- How to get the 10% participate & wellbeing value increase – access reform? Achieving increase without negative impacts? Work is happening to explore how are businesses operating, and how they are supported to increase the wellbeing outputs of their products to give most all-round benefit.
- Possible impact of changes to school year by removing week from summer and adding to autumn term when weather is likely worse. Whether this is being considered? WATO are sharing consultations with networks so businesses can have their say, but probably there will not be a consensus.
- The Outdoor partnership is taking a holistic perspective, looking across different areas to develop a holistic strategy that can include outdoor recreation and adventure tourism etc.

Strategy development will be undertaken in consultation with Welsh Government and Visit Wales through collaboration and discussion. The research has been shared widely, and it was suggested there is value of sharing with National Access Forum.

WATO plan to take a holistic approach as it looks to develop a strategy for adventure tourism and in doing will liaise with the various facets of the wider outdoor sector to ensure it recognises their contribution and position, whilst not stepping on their toes. WATO acknowledges that the outdoor sector sees no boundaries in what it offers but recognises that those outside of the outdoor sector are challenged by such an inclusive approach.

SR stressed that the Outdoor Education Bill is not being presented as only relevant to education; it has cross portfolio relevance, particularly, health, tourism, and economy.

The limitation of the research may be the short timescale for gathering data, and that it is a snapshot in time, but confident that the analysis is robust and leans to conservative estimates. Some challenges with lack of wales data and having to extrapolate from English sources.

*ACTION: Share research with National Access Forum and Regional Tourism Forums*

### **Closing remarks, summary & action**

The Chair thanked everyone for attending, and the ROCK UK Summit Centre for hosting. Added personal thanks for the sector's support on the Residential Outdoor Education Bill, and shared optimism for the year ahead.

*ACTION: Secretariat to share minutes and presentations with the Chair, for them to be forwarded onto Members of the Senedd and Ministers*

### **Dates of future meetings**

Meeting#9 (inc. AGM): Wednesday 13th March 2024 12:00-13:00 at Ty Hywel & online - Details to follow

Meeting#10: Wednesday 5th June 2024 12:00-13:00 at Ty Hywel & online - Details to follow