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1.	Email from SOEC trustee to DFM re effects of Covid-19 on residential outdoor education opportunities	21 August 2020	Personal data	Section 38(1)(b)
2.	Email to Scottish Ministers re effects of Covid-19 on residential outdoor education opportunities	26 August 2020	Personal data	Section 38(1)(b)
3.	Letter from AHOEC to DFM re loss of outdoor education sector in Scotland	27 August 2020	Personal data	Section 38(1)(b)
4.	Letter to DFM re Girlguiding Scotland's Netherurd centre	N/A	Personal data	Section 38(1)(b)
5.	Letter from SAPOE to DFM re challenges facing outdoor education centres	1 September 2020	Personal data	Section 38(1)(b)
6.	Email to DFM offering to support a return to outdoor education and residential trips	3 September 2020	Personal data	Section 38(1)(b)
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17.	Letter from Children 1st to DFM requesting support for the outdoor education sector	11 September 2020	Personal data	Section 38(1)(b)
18.	Email from Scottish Council of The Outward Bound Trust to DFM requesting a support package for outdoor education centres	14 September 2020	Personal data	Section 38(1)(b)
19.	Email from The Outward Bound Trust to DFM requesting support for the outdoor education sector	12 September 2020	Personal data	Section 38(1)(b)

20.	Letter from The Compass School to DFM requesting funding for the outdoor education sector	11 September 2020	Personal data	Section 38(1)(b)
21.	Email to DFM re continued closure of outdoor education centres during Covid-19	6 September 2020	Personal data	Section 38(1)(b)
22.	Letter from former outdoor education sector employee to Ms Forbes requesting support for outdoor education sector	N/A	Personal data	Section 38(1)(b)
23.	Email from the Institute for Outdoor Learning to DFM requesting support for outdoor education centres	11 September 2020	Personal data	Section 38(1)(b)
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35.	Letter from YouthLink Scotland to Richard Lochhead re financial challenges facing outdoor education sector	29 September 2020	Personal data	Section 38(1)(b)
36.	Email and letter from several organisations to DFM outlining their support for the #saveyouroutdoorcentres campaign	1 October 2020	Personal data	Section 38(1)(b)
37.	Email from W L Gore & Associates (UK) Holding Co Ltd outlining its support for the #saveyouroutdoorcentres campaign	1 October 2020	Personal data	Section 38(1)(b)
38.	Email from a primary school pupil to DFM requesting support for outdoor education and residential in Scotland	2 October 2020	Personal data	Section 38(1)(b)
39.	Letter from Moray House School of Education to FM requesting short and long-term support for outdoor education centres	5 October 2020	Personal data	Section 38(1)(b)

Enclosure No. 1: Email from SOEC trustee to DFM re effects of Covid-19 on residential outdoor education opportunities

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@btinternet.com>
Sent: 21 August 2020 22:08
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Scottish Outdoor Education

[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]

Dear John

Effects of COVID 19 on Residential outdoor education opportunities in Scotland

I write as a trustee of Scottish Outdoor Education Centres which currently operates three residential outdoor centres, with an average throughput of around 15,000 young people a year. SOEC is now operated by a charity that has been in existence since 1985, the centres having formerly been set up by the government prior to the Second World War. Since 1940 the centres have been delivering residential learning and development opportunities to young people in Scotland.

There is a real crisis looming in the provision of such experiences, as our centres as well as those of other providers, have been closed since lockdown. Currently there appears to be continuing constraint on residential visits since schools have returned.

The prime issue is that these centres are costly to run and maintain and unless there is some financial assistance made available now they could close. Charity organisations sell experiences to schools and youth groups, for pupils, students and young people who are disadvantaged or disabled. The measures taken to contain the virus has led to Centres being temporarily closed but the longer this goes on, the greater the likelihood of permanent closure. That would be catastrophic for children and young people in Scotland.

To put things in perspective around 70% of residential outdoor education experiences are provided by the third sector, (SOEC, Outward Bound, Scouts and others) with the remainder by education authorities. Official assistance is only directed to these authorities, some of which have recently closed their centres and facilities around Scotland. The third sector providers need to be recognised on an equal or proportionate footing at this time.

Residential outdoor education experiences for all pupils are enshrined in the government curriculum for excellence of which the deputy first minister has said *"I am keen to ensure that residential outdoor learning experiences continue to be part of the Curriculum for Excellence."*

I am very concerned that the government are happy to see this provided, but without recognising that our necessary response to COVID disease is probably leading to the permanent closure of such centres, with the likelihood that they could disappear altogether. Once they are gone, we will not be able to afford to bring them back. You must take on board that if a number of providers are forced to close the country will lose a large proportion of its capacity when it is probably needed most, and that the cost and time delay of alternative provision in the future will be huge.

I urge you to see this as an urgent issue and press for action now, particularly if centres will not realistically be able to open fully, until 2021.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Enclosure No. 2: Email to Scottish Ministers re effects of Covid-19 on residential outdoor education opportunities

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@protonmail.com>
Sent: 26 August 2020 13:47
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: FAO Minister for Mental Health: Effects of COVID 19 on Residential outdoor education opportunities in Scotland

Dear Clare,

Effects of COVID 19 on Residential outdoor education opportunities in Scotland

I'm writing to you as a trustee of Scottish Outdoor Education Centres (SOEC). SOEC currently operates three residential outdoor centres across Scotland with an average of around 15,000 children and young people attending the centres each year. The SOEC centres were originally set up by the government prior to World War 2, with SOEC operating as a charity since 1985. Since 1940 the centres have been delivering residential outdoor learning opportunities to children and young people from across Scotland.

The positive impact of outdoor learning experiences on children and young people's mental wellbeing is well documented. Particularly at this time, outdoor learning offers an opportunity for children and young people to learn together in a safe environment, try new challenges, develop confidence and build resilience. Charitable organisations such as SOEC provide quality outdoor learning experiences to young people who may otherwise experience barriers to accessing these – young people from urban areas (accounting for 80% of children and young people attending SOEC), young people facing socioeconomic disadvantage and disabled young people – and who have likely had the least access to these throughout the pandemic.

There is a real crisis looming in the provision of such experiences; our centres, as well as those of other providers, have been closed since the implementation of the lockdown. Although schooling has resumed, there remains constraint on residential visits.

These centres are costly to run and maintain and, unless there is some financial assistance made available now, they could close. Charity organisations sell experiences to schools and youth groups. The measures taken to contain the virus have led to temporary closures of the centres. However, the longer this goes on, the greater the likelihood of permanent closure. This would be catastrophic for children and young people in Scotland.

Around 70% of residential outdoor learning experiences in Scotland are provided by the third sector (SOEC, Outward Bound and Scouts among others) with the remainder provided by private sector or local authorities. Official assistance is only directed toward authorities, some of which had already closed their centres and facilities around Scotland. The third sector providers need to be recognised on an equal or proportionate footing at this time and the Government needs to protect this provision for children's education now and in the future.

The Scottish Government's Curriculum for Excellence enshrines residential outdoor learning experiences for pupils, and the Deputy First Minister has said "I am keen to ensure that residential outdoor learning experiences continue to be part of the Curriculum for Excellence."

I am deeply concerned that the government are happy to see this provided by the third sector, without recognising that our necessary response to COVID-19 is likely leading to the permanent closure of such centres. If they close, in all likelihood they will disappear altogether. Once they are gone, it will be too costly to bring them back. If a number of providers are forced to close, the country will lose a large proportion of its capacity when it is needed most, and this important developmental experience for children across Scotland will become a thing of the past.

I urge you to see this as an urgent issue and press for action now, particularly if centres will not realistically be able to open fully, until 2021.

Your sincerely,

[redacted]
[redacted]

Enclosure No. 3: Letter from AHOEC to DFM re loss of outdoor education sector in Scotland

Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres
c/o Institute of Outdoor Learning
Warwick Mill Business Centre
Carlisle
Cumbria
CA4 8RR
[redacted]@ahoec.org.uk

Mr John Swinney
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
The Scottish Government
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3D

Thursday 27th August 2020

RE: Loss of the Outdoor Education Sector in Scotland

Dear Mr Swinney

The advice issued on Friday 14th August advising schools against overnight school trips is yet another blow to the outdoor residential centre sector. Without the prospect of income generation through normal channels and clarity about when the advice will be reviewed, the future of outdoor education centres for Scotland's children and young people is falling apart right now. Currently the sector is staring into a 'black hole' of uncertainty resulting in redundancies, closures and ultimately the loss of a national resource.

Recent closures of Outdoor Education Centres for the Abernethy Trust, National Centre at Cumbrae, Girl Guiding Netherund and Scouting Scotland reducing their workforce by 60% are the start of a catastrophic period for our sector. AHOEC represents 29 Outdoor Education Centres in Scotland. At our most recent meeting on the 27th August 20, 57% of centres indicated that redundancy for employees has already started or due to start in preparation for the end of furlough. The end result of these redundancies is the loss of a national resource that should be currently be facilitating outdoor education as part of the recovery plan. A solution for this situation is now urgently needed to prevent anymore unnecessary closures of organisations that pre COVID were thriving enterprises delivering key curriculum outcomes and reducing the poverty related attainment gap.

We therefore request that the Scottish Government urgently take action to prevent any further loss and enable the mobilisation of a sector that should be is part of the immediate solution. There are four things the sector urgently requires:

1. Urgent and meaningful financial assistance to keep organisations financially viable over the next nine months and to prevent further wholesale redundancies. Financial support whilst centres remain closed due to pandemic conditions will mean Scotland still has outdoor centres as conditions improve and we can once again welcome young people back on courses.
2. A clear date when the advice on residential visits will be reviewed and the indicators that this will be measured by. This is essential to enable organisations to plan and also to discuss the nature of cancellations/postponements for current booked courses.
3. That Local Authorities are requested not to go beyond the issued guidance and implement

draconian rulings that prevent schools undertaking any sort of schools visit. This is strangling parts of the market that could still be operating and providing income for some of these centres.

4. That closure of Outdoor Education Centres (like the closure of rural schools) requires ministerial approval to prevent individual local politicians and accountants making decisions on a national resource.

We respectfully ask that the Scottish Government act in a matter of days to secure the future of outdoor education centres for Scotland's young people.

Yours Sincerely

[redacted]

Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres

[redacted]

Enclosure No. 4: Letter to DFM re Girlguiding Scotland's Netherurd centre

Your Reference:

[redacted],

[redacted]@icloud.com

Dear Sir,

I wrote to you as the education minister and urge the government to where ever possible look to help the Guide Association of Scotland save their outdoor centre Netherurd.

The closure of this centre will be a massive lost to the young people of Scotland and one that will never be replaced.

This excellent facility has allowed girls of all ages to develop and grow on a social and physical level and will be a real loss.

The facility has one of the finest facilities for children with special needs I have seen as a Leader in Scouts and offers inclusion in situations which otherwise are not.

Please consider what the Scottish Government can do to save this facility for future generations of girls and what it actually does for their development.

This is an appalling situation we are in but these centres without help and support now will become out of reach for our young people. One thing I have seen with Scouting and Guiding is that it is inclusive, regardless of background, wealth or ability all are welcome and all benefit and groups actively support the children who can not afford to attend centres like this. Failure to keep these centres in the voluntary sector will totally eliminate the ability for groups to support these children as the costs will be to high in the private sector.

Please, please consider supporting these voluntary organisations to get through this difficult time.

Yours

[redacted]

Group Scout Leader

Enclosure No. 5: Letter from SAPOE to DFM re challenges facing outdoor education centres

Scottish Advisory Panel for
Outdoor Education (SAPOE)



Mr John Swinney
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
The Scottish Government
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG
Tuesday 1st September 2020

Dear Mr Swinney

You will recall that SAPOE wrote to you on the 11th May, in the early days of the Education Recovery Group, with an offer of support and to help plan for the return to learning.

Since then, SAPOE executive committee and members have been working hard, alongside other outdoor and educational organisations, to convey a clear message about the importance of Outdoor Learning in supporting the return to learning for schools and pupils.

We have also delivered very practical responses: the development of an online teacher training module, hosted by Education Scotland, writing national guidance to support schools to return to local Outdoor Learning and developing guidance on the possible route to the re-opening of Outdoor Education Centres (OEC's) and how they could be used by schools.

Alongside this work, we requested two specific areas of support from Scottish Government. A clear directive for Local Authorities to include outdoor learning services in future planning and for SAPOE and outdoor organisations to be included in early stage discussions around supporting schools returning to learning. We believe these interventions have been largely successful, however at this key time in the education recovery plan, there are two issues that require urgent attention.

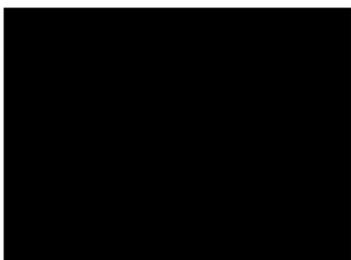
Many OEC's are in financial crisis, closures and ongoing redundancies already announced. The few Local Authority OEC's that remain are not immune to this risk, but the loss of third sector centres will have a significant impact on the ability of many Local Authorities to deliver a progressive and meaningful outdoor learning programme, including a universal right to a residential experience for all pupils. We would strongly urge the Scottish Government to consider further financial support to safeguard against the loss of this essential resource, both now and for the future. This loss will hit those pupils from social and economically deprived backgrounds the hardest creating further inequity.

Secondly, there is a risk that Local Authorities are making individual decisions about educational excursions which are beyond the guidance issued by Scottish Government. SAPOE intends to write to all Local Authorities, encouraging the use of local outdoor learning opportunities, day visits including use of outdoor centres, and the use of outdoor learning staff in schools and at local sites. We request that Scottish Government support this action by issuing further clarification and guidance on these points, to ensure at this critical time, schools and Local Authorities are not creating unnecessary barriers and preventing pupils from experiencing the many documented benefits of Outdoor Learning.

SAPOE continues to engage through the Outdoor Learning Supporting Education Recovery group which meets weekly with representation from Scottish Government, Education Scotland and sector representatives.

Having successfully completed a number of actions for this group we want to offer ongoing support for the future of Outdoor Learning. As part of the Priestley review of Education we believe it is imperative that Outdoor Learning is included in the process and can offer advice on this. We also suggest it is essential to establish a Scottish OEC estate collaborative between local government and private/voluntary sector (similar to early years capacity planning) coordinated through the Regional Collaboratives model to ensure equity of opportunity, viability and sustainability into the future as well as ensuring educational quality and professional standards.

Your sincerely



Enclosure No. 6: Email to DFM offering to support a return to outdoor education and residential trips

From: [redacted]

Date: 3 September 2020 at 15:46:44 BST

To: "Swinney J (John), MSP"

Cc: [redacted] , "Ewing F (Fergus), MSP", "Forbes K (Kate), MSP"

Subject: Offer to Support A Return To Outdoor Education and Residential Trips

Dear Mr Swinney,

We would like to offer to work with you to find solutions for a safe return to outdoor education and residential school trips when the time is right.

The Cairngorms Business Partnership and Lochaber Chamber of Commerce are both Chambers of Commerce and Destination Management Organisations, funded primarily by our members. We have a combined membership of over 600 businesses.

As you will be aware both the Cairngorms and Lochaber Chambers have a very high proportion of activity providers and activity centres among our members. We know that you will also be aware that there is a fear of significant business failures and job losses within that sector together with a skills drain that will have a lasting impact on the ability of those sectors to recover. We know that you will also be acutely aware of the importance of outdoor education and school trips in underpinning a sustainable sector that provides year round employment and support many rural communities.

We, and our impacted members, fully appreciate that the priority for all is the health and safety of all of our communities.

Our offer is to work with yourself and, with your blessing and support, your officials to discuss how, when the time is right, overnight school trips to activity centres can resume. We would be very

happy to pull a selection of our members, such as Abernethy Trust and The Outward Bound Trust, together to use their expertise to establish how operations might be able to resume, in a safe manner, when the time is right. This level of dialogue and planning would give us, our members and hopefully schools and local authorities, confidence to plan for the future and preserve as much of the sector as possible.

Thank you for your consideration, we look forward to hearing from you

[redacted]

[redacted]

Cairngorms Business Partnership (VisitCairngorms)
Lochaber Chamber of Commerce(Outdoor Capital of the UK)
cc: Fergus Ewing, Kate Forbes.

Enclosure No. 7: Email to FM requesting SG support for outdoor education sector

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@hotmail.co.uk>
Sent: 04 September 2020 22:26
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Outdoor education centres

Good Evening,

I have been very supportive of the decisions made by your government in relation to the pandemic up to now, but the decision not to support outdoor education is wrong.

I appreciate available finance is limited, however providing financial support to arts, nightclubs, while ignoring youth and outdoor education, whether that be voluntary youth organisations or professional centres, is completely unacceptable.

The youth of our great country need to learn about the outdoors and how to look after it, as well as being given the opportunity to learn new skills ready to take an active place in future society.

I appreciate that residential experiences are a long way off, so support is required to ensure that the youth of today will have access to outdoor learning, which is a key part of the government's curriculum for excellence.

I would urge you and your government to reconsider your decision and provide some support to this already struggling sector, before it is lost to us.

Thank you

[redacted]

Enclosure No. 8: Email to FM re continued closure of outdoor education centres during Covid-19

From: [FirstMinisterWebsite@gov.scot][SMTP:FIRSTMINISTERWEBSITE@GOV.SCOT]
Sent: 06 September 2020 21:09:42
To: First Ministers Website Mailbox
Subject: Outdoor Activity Centres
Auto forwarded by a Rule

From: Mrs [redacted] <[redacted]@ymail.com>
Subject: Outdoor Activity Centres

Message Body:

I am pleased that we are beginning to return to some kind of normality and so many places are allowed to re-open. I am however very annoyed and bewildered as to the decision to keep Outdoor Activity Centres closed especially as the children are all back to school and mixing freely. I have to question the relevance of Amusement Arcades, Carnivals, Funfairs and Soft Play Areas and why they are deemed as safe.

[Redacted]. Dalguise is set in the middle of nowhere in a beautiful wooded area and is the epitome of outdoor life for both staff and children/youth groups attending the centre. The only time children would be together in slightly larger groups is meal times and bed time otherwise they are out in the fresh air for the majority of day taking part in enjoyable and educational activities. Stringent infection controls are being or have been put in place in line with government guidance and yet the highly trained staff are still being denied the chance to return to work leaving their lives in limbo. The entire PGL staff are now being faced with redundancy which I and thousands of others see as an injustice. Please reverse the decision and allow them to open for the welfare of current PGL staff and children who need to be outdoors enjoying the experience which Outdoor Activity Centres offer. I have previously sent comments to Dept of Education Ministers John Swinney and Gavin Williamson asking them to change their decision regarding this subject.

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on the First Minister of Scotlands website (<https://firstminister.gov.scot>)

Enclosure No. 9: Email to DFM expressing concern for the future of outdoor education providers

From: noreply@parliament.scot <noreply@parliament.scot>
Sent: 03 September 2020 21:03
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Message from Scottish Parliament website

name:
[redacted]

address:
[redacted]
[redacted]

postcode:
[redacted]

email:
[redacted]@hotmail.com

telephone:
[redacted]

message:
Dear Mr Swinney,

I am writing to say that I am extremely concerned for the future of Outward Bound and other providers of outdoor education.

The Outward Bound Trust's Loch Eil Centre just outside Fort William is one of the larger year round employers in the town. Before the pandemic the centre employed over fifty staff and worked with over six thousand young people a year.

The centre also allowed West Highland College and my own Active Schools programme to access the centre and use their equipment free of charge.

Without support for the sector, we may lose what remains of a once much larger programme of outdoor education for our young people.

I hope that you will be able to look at how to support this important asset for generations to come.

Many thanks

[redacted]

Enclosure No. 10: Email from outdoor education sector employee to DFM requesting support for outdoor education centres

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@icloud.com>

Sent: 07 September 2020 15:24

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Outdoor Education Centres - Their Future

Dear John

I write this plea to save outdoor education centres from closure in a personal and private capacity.

[Redacted]. I have been privileged to have been guided along the way by parents, teachers and a college lecturer to amass a rich outdoor experience at home and abroad. In turn, this has allowed me the opportunity to pass on this love of the outdoors to young people for nearly 40 years. With like minded colleagues we have given young people the chance to see many parts of our beautiful country and open their eyes to further afield places like Alaska, Iceland, Nepal and the European alps.

This would not have been possible had I not been exposed to the outdoors from a young age.

[Redacted]. His leaders inspired him and many others to continue going to the outdoors for many years to come. **[Redacted]**. I attach a short video in which he features in and shows the **[redacted]**. Whether they talked about the benefits of doing so in the way we do today is unknown however, as I know you enjoy the outdoors I don't need to tell you what positives and life changing benefits it can bring.

My dad's feelings for our country and what it brings and what it can potentially further bring was evident in him campaigning for an independent Scotland all his life. **[Redacted]**.

[Redacted]. These experiences were magical and led to the children of the children attending these social occasions before the centre was of course closed.

The old Grampian Regional Council had around a dozen outdoor centres, now there are only two. One operated by the city, the other by the shire.

There is the distinct possibility we could lose around half of our present centres nationally if there is not government intervention. This would be a terrible situation on many levels with many suffering in the short and long term. We would be killing the goose that lays the golden egg.

I am aware of the amount of time and energy my colleagues in outdoor education have spent over the summer holiday developing outdoor learning materials and planning for the return to outdoor centres. We are all going through extremely challenging times but I fear for the future of the outdoor education sector and the long lasting implications if we lose it. It may never come back just like these Grampian Region centres. It will also hit adventure tourism and all the associated spin offs. I believe there is a fund available for NGB's. Can there be support for centres and outdoor education in general as a key player in the recovery phase of Covid?

I would like you to give this consideration and thanks for taking the time to read this.

With best regards
[redacted]

Enclosure No. 11: Email from teacher to DFM requesting support for outdoor education centres

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@lomondschool.com>

Sent: 09 September 2020 11:41

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: Concern over the future of outdoor education centres

Dear Mr Swinney,

I understand that there is reason to be concerned over the future of Scotland's Outdoor Education Provision and would like to highlight my concerns and perspective to you.

As a teacher who has been heavily involved in the outdoor education sector for many years both within local authority centres, independent schools and private businesses and as a participant, instructor and teacher, I have witnessed first hand the importance of the resource that outdoor centres provide. The most obvious benefit is directly for the learner and young people in our care, who benefit hugely from the experiences and learning opportunities available through, in particular, residential outdoor education. But in addition to this, there is a far wider reaching benefit for society. Not only do they provide training opportunities to people running voluntary groups, teachers and instructors, but they are at the core of upholding standards and examples of good practice, which, especially with the changes to the AALA/AALS structure is more important than ever.

Scotland is a place of big landscapes, exciting coastlines, challenging conditions and diverse environments. If we do not prioritise how our young people experience and value these landscapes we will inevitably pay the price through impacts on our tourism and recreation economy in the long run.

I understand that COVID 19 has brought many challenges, but it should be recognised that Outdoor Education is uniquely placed to help our young people and society to develop resilience, a key outcome of many outdoor experiences, and one essential to Scotland's future success. Not only is it of benefit to our societies recovery in the short term, but as I have already noted, it has such long lasting impacts on individuals that, while it is difficult to quantify, the Scottish Government must recognise its importance and support it going forwards.

While there are challenges in the short term, Scotland is well set to support learning outdoors especially with COVID 19 focusing attention on use of outdoor spaces:

- Outdoor Learning is embedded as a 'regular and progressive experience for all learners' with in CfE.
- GTCS Teachers Standards for Full Registration ask that teachers 'seek appropriate outdoor learning opportunities'.
- The UN Rights of the Child seek to engage children in real world opportunities to learn about the natural environment and communities in Scotland and beyond.
- The progression from 3-18 outdoors encompasses a journey from nursery and school grounds, into local community and onwards into wild and adventurous places. A residential experience is often a key connection for older pupils with Scotland with our scenery, communities and rural opportunities for their future. This helps the long-term sustainability of our economies such as tourism, agriculture, farming, fisheries, food and energy.
- A residential learning experience provides opportunities and benefits that cannot be achieved in any other educational context or setting and can be life changing. It is vital to engage our young people beyond their own communities, widening horizons and aspiration. New temporary communities are created, different foods explored, and new behaviours and skills developed. This supports the Scottish government agenda for sustainable communities, healthy lifestyles and a strong society.

The potential loss of our residential outdoor education centres, and the negative impact on children's learning experiences that I have highlighted above are extremely concerning. The financial pressure on local authorities and charitable organisations is already leading to centre closures, with further predicted over this winter, representing a critical time for this valued national resource.

The cost of replacing closed centres will be a barrier to many re-opening, as such the loss of these centres should be seen as permanent. Scotland's capacity for delivery residential experiences will be reduced below the level required. This will result in more schools travelling south to England, drastically increasing the inequity gap through increased costs.

There is a pivotal decision required by the Scottish Government which will determine the opportunities for future generations of learners in Scotland, by protecting the future of our outdoor education centres. This is an opportunity for our government to maintain its aspiration to be the best place in the world to grow up.

I would like you to support three actions:

1. Reconsider a funding package for outdoor education centres, focussed on protecting the valuable buildings and facilities used for residential outdoor education.
2. The Education Recovery Group and Association of Directors Education Services encourage the learning opportunities offered by local greenspace and day visits to outdoor centres, by utilising the skill of outdoor centre staff, working alongside school teachers.
3. Establish a working group tasked to undertake an outdoor education estate capacity and capability study. This would be a collaboration between local government, third sector and private sector, based on a model already used for the Early Years capacity planning.

Fundamentally, outdoor learning enriches learning, raises attainment, and in Scotland is the right of every learner. I look forward to your response.

Kind regards,
[redacted]

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[redacted]

[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]

Enclosure No. 12: Letter from SU Scotland to Ms Todd requesting support for Third Sector outdoor learning providers

DM/ER

10 September 2020

Maree Todd MSP
M4.03
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

Dear Maree Todd MSP

Urgent support for Third Sector Outdoor Learning providers to maintain delivery to children and young people.

Each year, SU Scotland deliver Outdoor Learning Experiences for 7,500 children and young people, equating to over 22,500 formal and informal learning days, with around a fifth of those young people from SIMD deciles 1-3. We partner with around 100 schools and over 120 youth groups / church groups providing residential at our three centres and in other locations around Scotland. We have a dedicated team of over 50 staff and 1,200 volunteers who support this activity. We are one of many Third Sector providers who support young people in their development and provide key opportunities for Outdoor Learning.

SU Scotland operate Allnacriche, which is based in your constituency. We want to highlight our concerns about the threat to these Third Sector providers, who provide much of the Outdoor Learning capacity, a key component of the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence.

The Scottish Government advice issued to Directors of Education on Friday 14th August advising against overnight school trips was a disappointment to the outdoor residential centre sector. Centres were already reeling from the loss of income as a result of the national lockdown in March, many of whom, including ourselves, refunded schools and groups who were due to come.

Without the prospect of income generation through normal channels and clarity about when the advice will be reviewed, the future of Outdoor Education Centres for Scotland's children and young people is bleak. Currently the sector is staring into a 'black hole' of uncertainty resulting in redundancies, closures and ultimately the loss of a national resource. We are looking at an almost complete loss of revenue for 12 months, perhaps more.

We were disappointed by the decision, communicated to us on 3rd September, by the Deputy First Minister not to make funding available to support our sector. Recent closures of Outdoor Education Centres for the Abernethy Trust, National Centre at Cumbrae, Girl Guiding at Netherurd and Scouting Scotland reducing their workforce by 60% are the start of a catastrophic period for our sector. Many Third Sector providers are charities, with limited reserves and funding options. We are currently considering our own options.

The end result of these closures and redundancies is the loss of a national capacity that should be facilitating Outdoor Learning as part of the recovery plan. A solution for this situation is now urgently needed to prevent any more unnecessary closures of organisations that pre COVID were thriving enterprises delivering key curriculum outcomes and reducing the poverty related attainment gap.

The Scottish Government guidance allowing day visits for schools was a small glimmer of hope. Our experience is that many Local Authorities are not willing to consider this and have mandated that out of school visits should not take place. If this situation continues it will undermine any Third Sector initiatives to deliver Outdoor Learning as part of the recovery, whether working with those who are struggling to make a return to school, or supporting schools to deliver activity days for groups in the outdoors.

We ask you to:

- Raise our concerns in the Scottish Parliament and advocate for the reconsideration of direct financial support for the Outdoor Learning Sector to maintain capacity and deliver for the children and young people of Scotland.
- Engage with your Local Authority to ensure that they make the most of the support that is available from the Third Sector Outdoor Learning providers as part of their education recovery plan.

We look forward to receiving your support. If you have any further questions, please contact me using the contact details above.

Yours Sincerely



Enclosure No. 13: Email from teacher cc'd to DFM re closure of outdoor education centres - dated

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@hotmail.com>
Sent: 09 September 2020 12:12
To: Denham A (Ash), MSP <Ash.Denham.msp@parliament.scot>
Cc: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Closure of outdoor education centres

Ms Denham and Mr Swinney,

Please see the link to the article on the SNPs decision to not provide support to Scotland's outdoor centres.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-54055345>

[Redacted]. This has afforded me the opportunity to take several hundred children to outdoor centres for their P7 camp experience.

The positive impact that this right of passage has on many of these children is immeasurable. It provides them with markers in the sand of times when they were able to overcome fears, develop confidence and show resilience. Something they carry with them for years to come. Are these not some of the most important skills that our schools, our teachers and our curriculum can hope to deliver?

I recently had to break the news to my class that their camp trip has had to be cancelled this year due to covid restrictions. This devastated many of them!

Please do not allow this to become the norm and have a succession of school children robbed of the experiences that only outdoor centres can provide.

I await your response.

Kind regards, [redacted].

Enclosure No. 14: Email from education researcher to DFM and others requesting support for outdoor education sector

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@gmail.com>

Sent: 11 September 2020 09:33

To: chris.stephens.mp@parliament.uk; Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>; Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP <Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Support for outdoor education

Dear Chris, John, and Nicola

Many thanks for your good work so far in relation to the management of the Covid-19 crisis in Scotland. I have found it reassuring to know we are being looked after by a government which genuinely seems to care about all its people. I was dismayed to learn recently, however, of the rejection offered to outdoor education providers in Scotland, in response to their request for financial support while Covid-19 restrictions are in place.

As a Scottish education researcher, I have been involved in past research on outdoor learning. I know the value placed on learning outdoors historically in Scotland, and its emphasis and importance throughout Curriculum for Excellence. I'm also aware of the increasing encouragement for the utilisation of local outdoor areas, and although I think this is a helpful approach, I also believe that short term local trips can never hope to replicate the social, self esteem, and other benefits offered by residential adventure/activity type provision.

I also know that spending time in the outdoors has significant benefits for mental health. As an adoptive parent of a care experienced Primary One child, I believe that any additional mental health supports that can be made available in the immediate aftermath of Covid-19, whenever that comes, will be absolutely crucial in ensuring that Scotland's children and young people, and especially those most vulnerable to mental health difficulties, can recover from their experiences. I know you are also aware of and committed to meeting the mental health needs of Scotland's children and young people, and particularly those with care experience.

Finally, as a member of the SNP, I have a great deal of faith in your ability to deliver independence for Scotland in the near future; but I have also had faith in many of your other policies, including those around education and mental health. You have in the past asked the public to judge you by your record on education, and have recognised the need for further work on mental health for young people. The loss of residential outdoor education services will have a devastating impact on education in Scotland, and relatedly, on the opportunities a generation of school children (already disadvantaged by coronavirus) will have for promoting good mental health and recovery. Once these opportunities for Scotland's young people are lost, they will be very difficult to regain. The repercussions of this loss will be felt throughout Scottish education, and felt by Scotland's children and young people, for a long time to come - and certainly well into our early days as an independent nation.

I strongly urge you to recognise the vital role of outdoor education provision in Scotland, and to find ways to provide support and ensure its continued existence in a post-Covid world.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Enclosure No. 15: Email from SOEC trustee to Scottish Ministers re effects of Covid-19 on residential outdoor education opportunities for young people with ASN

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@protonmail.com>

Sent: 04 September 2020 18:51

To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>

Subject: FAO Minister for Older People and Equalities: Impact of Covid 19 on Residential Outdoor Learning opportunities for young people with additional support needs

Dear Minister for Older People and Equalities,

Impact of COVID 19 on Residential Outdoor Learning opportunities for Young People with Additional Support Needs

I write to you as a trustee of Scottish Outdoor Education Centres; SOEC currently operates three residential outdoor centres in Scotland, with an average of 15,000 young people visiting the centres each year. The centres were originally set up by the government in the 1940s, and have operated as a charity since 1985 providing residential outdoor learning opportunities for children and young people.

The residential experience provides a unique space where children and young people can explore and develop their skills and knowledge out with the classroom environment. It poses an opportunity for personal and social development, building resilience and independence, providing an opportunity for young people see themselves and others differently.

This is of huge value to all children and young people, but particularly to young people with additional support needs and to those living in areas of deprivation. In addition to school groups, SOEC provides high quality residential outdoor learning experiences to a wide range of groups and organisations supporting young people facing additional challenges: young people with additional support needs, young people with physical disabilities, young carers and young people from areas of significant socioeconomic deprivation. For many young people this experience is their first away from home or out with an urban environment and is a valuable, developmental life experience.

The residential outdoor learning sector faces an imminent crisis. Our centres, and those of other providers, have been closed since March due to measures taken to contain the virus. Though schooling and some youth work has resumed, residential visits are still on hold.

The Centres have been temporarily shut down but we urgently need Government support to sustain the organisation until we can reopen. Charity organisations sell experiences to schools and youth groups. The longer we remain closed the greater the likelihood of permanent closure. That would be catastrophic for children and young people in Scotland.

Around 70% of residential outdoor education experiences are provided by the third sector, (SOEC, Outward Bound, Scouts and others) with the remainder by education authorities. Official assistance is only directed to these authorities, some of which have recently closed their centres and facilities around Scotland. The third sector providers need to be recognised on an equal or proportionate footing at this time.

The Deputy First Minister has said "I am keen to ensure that residential outdoor learning experiences continue to be part of the Curriculum for Excellence." With trading halted and without financial assistance, our charity is under threat.

I am very concerned that the government are voicing commitment to this vital developmental experience for young people, but without action to mitigate the existential threat posed by our ongoing inability to provide residential experiences. We understand the closure of Centres as a measure to contain Covid-19 but where other businesses are now being encouraged to reopen and resume work with young people, or receiving support until they can, the outdoor centre teams are locked out, the inevitable result of which will be that they close permanently. Once they are gone, we will not be able to afford to bring them back. You must take on board that if a number of providers are forced to close the country will lose a large proportion of its capacity at time when young people need these experiences, and this will place further

barriers to young people facing additional challenges or disadvantage accessing these experiences. Further, the cost and time delay of future alternative provision future will be huge.

I urge you to see this as an urgent issue and press for action now, particularly if centres will not realistically be able to open fully, until 2021.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

[redacted]

Enclosure No. 16: Email from school pupil to DFM requesting support for outdoor education centres

From: [redacted]

Sent: 6 September 2020 19:09

To: Swinney J (John), MSP

Cc: joanna.cherry.mp@parliament.uk, Johnson D (Daniel), MSP , Johnstone A (Alison), MSP

Subject: Outdoor Education

Dear Mr Swinney,

I heard this week from my friends that the Scottish Government is not going to help the Outdoor Residential Schools to stay open through the Covid-19 pandemic and that this will mean that many of the outdoor education staff will lose their jobs and also that some of these centres may never be able to open again.

I wanted to write and tell you how important and how enjoyable my experience was of my school trip to the Benmore Outdoor Education Centre and why I think these opportunities should be available for everyone into the future.

The week that we spent at the outdoor centre was the first time that many of us had been away with our friends and away from home. We were taught all about nature and how important it is to look after and protect our wild spaces. We also did lots of amazing activities that we would never have been able to try in the city, where I live. For example, we went gorge walking up a river, we went caving and we abseiled off a 20m cliff.

All my friends agreed that the week we spent at Benmore was the best week ever and the most special thing about Primary School. I am really sad to think that this might not be available for other children. Please can you try and find a way to save these centres and support the people who work there? They were amazing and so kind and clever.

Thank you for reading this.

[redacted]

(age 11)

S1, Tynecastle High School, Edinburgh

[redacted]

Enclosure No. 17: Letter from Children 1st to DFM requesting support for the outdoor education sector

John Swinney

Deputy First Minister

Scottish Government

St Andrew's House

Regent Road

Edinburgh

EH1 3DG

11th September 2020

Dear John,

Support for outdoor education sector to survive through coronavirus

I am writing to express Children 1st's deep concern to read reports that you are unable to agree financial support for the outdoor education centre sector in Scotland and to ask you to review this decision in light of the essential role that the sector can play in supporting children and families to recover from the long term impacts of the covid-19 pandemic.

As you know, many of the children and families we support struggle with anxiety and emotional distress, often rooted in previously unaddressed trauma. It has been widely acknowledged that Scotland faced a crisis in children and young people's mental health before the coronavirus pandemic and we have been working with partners across the country developing solutions to address this. As we have discussed before, for children whose distress is linked to the difficulties they face at home, the traditional medical model is often not the answer. Rather, as our work with a variety of partners shows, providing whole family support, which seeks to understand and respond to the individual challenges the child and family face, focuses on strengthening family relationships and grows confidence and resilience is what makes the biggest difference to children and young people's wellbeing.

Since 2019 Children 1st have been working with Ardroy outdoor education centre in Argyll and Bute to support young people and their families affected by anxiety and mental ill health to come together for a weekend of outdoor activities. Taking part in outdoor challenges, supporting each other through new experiences and being in nature together has led to incredible long-term benefits in children and families' relationships, improved their mental health and helped parents to better support their children to recover from difficult and traumatic experiences. Families who are being supported by Children 1st, who have been to Ardroy have said that the experience has led to long term improvements for their children and their family.

For some children and families' the impact of the last few months have brought them close to breaking point and we continue to support them to cope through these difficult times. As well as ongoing support to get through the pandemic, children and families facing the greatest challenges will also need support to recover from their experiences. Having seen first-hand the difference that outdoor education can make for children and young people showing severe signs of mental-ill health, as part of a wider offer of family support, we believe that outdoor education centres can play an essential role in supporting children and families to recover from the impact of the pandemic.

The Scottish Government has been absolutely clear that you want our country to be the best place for every child to grow up and for all children to enjoy the same life chances. You have also committed to incorporating the UNCRC this parliamentary cycle. Our children are incredibly fortunate to live in a country with such a great outdoors to explore and enjoy. However, for children whose families face the relentless challenges of poverty, trauma or mental ill-health outdoor education can be their only chance of introduction to the physical and emotional health benefits of the amazing wilderness which we have on our doorstep in Scotland.

As you will know, Article 31 of the UNCRC is clear that States Parties should recognise the right of children to rest, leisure and play while Article 39 says that States Parties must take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of child victims of abuse and neglect

Leaving the sector to collapse would be a devastating blow for children and young people's mental health, would impact on many children's ability to recover and would have the biggest impact on the lives of children whose families have already been hardest hit.

I'd be very happy to discuss this with you further, and in the meantime would encourage you, as a Rights Bearer, to watch our short film which demonstrates the difference an outward bound weekend made for one

group of families we work alongside. You can view the film on our you-tube channel using the link: <https://youtu.be/ZII50MKsOSY>

Yours sincerely



[redacted]

[redacted], Children 1st

Enclosure No. 18: Email from Scottish Council of The Outward Bound Trust to DFM requesting a support package for outdoor education centres

Sent: 14 September 2020 11:41

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Support Package for Outdoor Centres

Dear Mr Swinney

It was with extreme disappointment that I read the decision not to provide a support package for Outdoor Education Centres in such unprecedented times. I understand the competing pressures on the public purse and that difficult budgetary decisions have to be made (I was previously a Head of Service in a Local Authority). However, I sincerely believe that the consequences of this decision will have wider societal and economic impacts that will be felt for many years and directly affect future generations of our young people.

I will not seek to persuade you of the immediate economic consequence to those employed within the outdoor education sector or the future viability of the centres, as the First Minister eloquently made that case, in her daily briefing on Friday, when making her plea to the UK treasury to extend financial support for key sectors. I also fully understand and accept the rationale for not allowing young people to attend residential centres at this time.

The benefit of learning in the outdoors is comprehensively acknowledged by Scottish Government within its wider education strategy. Indeed, outdoor learning on a limited basis is currently being encouraged as part of the return to school agenda, in recognition of the contribution made to the general education and well-being of students. Research identifying the exponential benefits to young people, acquired from a residential element to outdoor learning, is widely published. My personal testimony to those, often life changing, benefits is borne out of many years supporting young people through those experiences in my work for The Princes Trust and The Outward Bound Trust. The opportunity to develop personal skills and attributes including resilience, risk awareness and management, effective decision making and leadership has never been needed more by our young people and the structured environment for them to safely explore those needs has never been more at risk.

Removing the opportunity to have those experiences will have socio-economic impacts on health (physical, psychological and emotional), well-being, community safety, education and employment. The long term economic consequences of those impacts will far outweigh any modest short term financial support.

I urge you to review this decision and ask that the immediate support being sought be considered as an 'invest to save' bid that will be handsomely repaid by having a resilient, stable and healthy generation of young people better able to contribute to our communities.

Thank you for taking the time to read my plea and in anticipation of your support for this small but critical sector.

[redacted]

[redacted] of the Scottish Council of The Outward Bound Trust

Enclosure No. 19: Email from The Outward Bound Trust to DFM requesting support for the outdoor education sector

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@outwardbound.org.uk>

Sent: 12 September 2020 08:14

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: Please reconsider your position on supporting the Outdoor Sector.

Dear Mr Swinney,

Let Scotland's Skilled Outdoor Educators Be Part of the Solution to Scotland Flourishing.

I am an optimist.

I work for an optimistic organisation.

I optimistically voted for independence as I believed the SNP to be an optimistic, value driven, aspirational political party.

In 2017, I wrote to you and spoke with you at the School Leader Scotland conference to express my optimism in view of the disappointing PISA scores. I shared my observation of working with many Scottish schools and Head Teachers: that there is fantastic work happening in Scotland through the CfE and it was too early to be reflected by PISA but will be reflected by our Scottish society in years to come.

On separate occasions we have hosted Jamie Hepburn, Kate Forbes and yourself at Outward Bound Loch Eil. At the time of your visit, you spoke of 'an open door to come knocking if courses are closely aligned to government education agendas'. We have never used that offer... until now... when it is needed for the entire sector. I know personally you love getting outdoors and had spoken of your love of Tìre when you visited Loch Eil. I am sure you will understand the benefits of getting outdoors on a personal level and I wanted to write to ask you to reconsider your position on supporting the outdoor residential sector.

The Outward Bound Trust [OBT] is a proactive organisation which refuses to sit back and just hope for a bright future for Scottish young people. They will fight for what they believe in and work tirelessly to provide the best experiences in partnership with other organisations. They do not ask for help lightly. This is the kind of education provider you should be championing for Scotland.

The outdoor education sector, in which I have worked for the last 18 years is at a tipping point. Each year the sector provides thousands of education courses for young people that are closely tailored to the school curriculum. They do so almost entirely without direct government funding. What the sector is asking for now is help from Scottish government to be part of the solution to educating in a Covid and climate-aware context.

Given the combination of the pandemic and planetary issues we face, it is my firm belief that outdoor educators should currently be considered keyworkers and supported as such. The highly skilled staff in the sector can support the skills that are needed right now for our young people to build their optimism about the future of Scotland. Our 'in school' educators have been directed that their focus, as young people return to schools, should be Health & Wellbeing. Let us also use these perfectly suited outdoor staff to enhance that effort.

The sector agrees that residential experiences must currently be put on hold. However, the current position of the government- that the outdoor sector can only provide day-long experiences- is untenable. Travel to our rural centres presents prohibitive cost and time barriers. For residential centres to operate successfully there must be another solution. Survival of the sector may well depend on it. By the nature of their work outdoor educators are dynamic and used to adapting fast to changing circumstances. We would be happy to do so again at this time.

The offer to schools OBT (and other similar providers) would like to make is, that for the duration of the time residential courses are not possible, their centre staff work in schools getting their young people learning safely outdoors and supporting education staff across the Curriculum for Excellence.

The arguments to treat outdoor staff as key workers are too many and too strong to be ignored! Evidence of the broad and positive contribution made by outdoor educators is outlined below. Scottish government please listen! This is the sector coming knocking...

Employment in Rural Communities & Employability Skills For Young People

In Fort William, OBT is one of the biggest year-round employers. The staff are active, enthusiastic individuals who also support many other organisations in their communities (e.g. Mountain Rescue, Scouting). Having fallen in love with Lochaber, many instructors go on to start their own businesses, further developing this area into a prosperous one. You need look no further for evidence of this than Nevis Range, Nevisport, Rockhopper Sea Kayaking and many of the UKs finest mountaineering providers. The ripple impact for employment in Fort William of this single organisation is huge for the area.

At the start of the month Nicola Sturgeon announced a '[Green job revolution](#)'. Surely the outdoor sector that employs young people and supports development of employability skills can be part of that solution? Sturgeon, hinting at the direction of her plans, said: "Equipping people with skills for the future to keep them in work or get back into employment will be critical. From our young people entering the job market for the first time to older workers who need to retrain, we will make sure that no one is left behind."

For further links if you need specifics on how the sector links to your Developing Young Workforce Education Agenda I was asked to write a blog for Education Scotland some years ago on the links which can be accessed on the ES website [here](#)

Mental Health & Wellbeing.

The support the sector offers wellbeing is [well-evidenced](#) and seems the most self-evident through the pandemic. Advice from Scottish Government is to meet outdoors where possible, so why not educate outdoors where possible?

It is safe to assert being in nature is good for well-being, from [GP's in Shetland](#) prescribing time in nature, to those advocating '[green time not screen time](#)' the calming effect of being outdoors is widely explored.

From my personal experience (my MSc dissertation findings and most regular topics of conversation with Head Teachers) it is the confidence and resilience young people build through real challenges at OBT that is most valued. When faced with challenges, as undoubtedly, we all are currently, we need our young people to be able show their grit.

Our Environment

Those who spend time in nature and have a connection to it are more likely to care for the [environment](#).

The need for our society to care for Scotland has been an important recent topic here in the Highlands. Our access laws give us a great privilege where we can easily explore and experience all that Scotland offers. However, the 'staycation' has tested this privilege with countless examples of poor care for our wild places. I was sad to see stories and pictures of the devastation. However, I questioned how anyone can judge this behaviour, as without proper education which the outdoor sector can provide how can we expect people to care for our wild places?

Final Thoughts

Lastly, let it not be an SNP government that puts the nail in the coffin of the outdoor sector please! A party that has done (& is doing) such a brilliant job of keeping us safe through the pandemic now needs to look forward optimistically to the solutions that lie before you to make this country a better place. I have no doubt that you have difficult funding decisions to make. However, I believe if you view the outdoor sector as key workers with the skills, expertise and experience to support Education and young people through this uncertain time you and Scotland will be in a better place for it.

Please do not let this generation become "[the last children in the woods](#)". My own children are 4 & 6 years old and it is for them that I write this letter. I weep at the thought that they could miss out on the benefit this incredible sector has to offer and that they might miss out on something that I believe through the CfE is their entitlement.

Thank you for considering this again.

Yours Sincerely,

[redacted]

12th September 2020

[redacted]

[redacted] - SCOTLAND

The Outward Bound Trust
Loch Eil Centre, PH33 7NN

T [redacted]

W outwardbound.org.uk

Enclosure No. 20: Letter from The Compass School to DFM requesting funding for the outdoor education sector

WEST ROAD | HADDINGTON | EH41 3RD

TEL: 01620 822642 FAX: 01620 822144

E: OFFICE@THECOMPASSSCHOOL.CO.UK

WWW.THECOMPASSSCHOOL.CO.UK

Mr John Swinney MSP
Deputy First Minister & Cabinet Secretary
For Education & Skills
Scottish Parliament
Holyrood
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

11 September 2020

Dear Mr Swinney

As a [REDACTED] of a Scottish primary school, I am very concerned and surprised to learn that the Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education (SAPOE) have had their recent direct request to you for essential financial support for outdoor education centres in Scotland rejected.

As you know, this is a sector which has been very severely affected by the Government's necessary restrictions. Everyone accepts the need for safety at this current time and can understand that to proceed with residential visits, regardless of the age of the children, would not be prudent at this stage. However, I am alarmed that the Scottish Government do not appear to have responded constructively to the heartfelt plea of SAPOE for assistance at a time when their member centres have little or no income streams and are facing permanent closure. It is reported that in reply to their letter, an email from an education policy manager for the Scottish government was sent to the heads of outdoor centres across Scotland which said that you, as Deputy First Minister had considered "possible financial support, but is unable to agree financial support for the sector given continued pressure on Scottish government budgets."

I have to say that I find this response astonishing given this Government's previous statements regarding the invaluable role of outdoor education in our children's education. Indeed, the Government's own guidance on Outdoor Learning published in 2010 clearly states the importance of this within the national Curriculum For Excellence. More recently, in Scottish Government Guidance on outdoor education issued to schools and published on 29 May 2020, Children's Minister, Maree Todd said:

"Playing, learning and having fun outdoors helps to improve children's wellbeing and resilience, as well as their physical and mental health. It also gives children the opportunity to develop a life-long appreciation of the natural world. This is particularly important during the current circumstances, when we are all having to spend so much more time indoors."

On 25 November 2019, in a press event at the Royal Botanic Gardens, you yourself said:

"Learning outdoors has many benefits, from developing an appreciation for the natural world to problem solving, as well as improving the health and wellbeing of both pupils and teachers. Building in opportunities for outdoor learning into everyday school activity means young people from all backgrounds have the opportunities to engage, understand and help our natural world."

At The Compass School, we have ensured that outdoor education is at the heart of our children's experiences as they move through the School. We make significant use of the bountiful natural resources of East Lothian and its environs such as Butterdean Wood, Pease Bay and the River Tyne and for over twenty years, we have taken children from as young as 7 years old (Primary 3) on residential visits to centres in the Cairngorms, Perthshire and the Borders. The benefits these experiences have brought our children are immeasurable: the development of our young people's confidence and self-esteem; the learning of new skills and knowledge of the outdoor world; the building of resilience and a sense of adventure; the opportunity to develop leadership skills and taking responsibility of oneself and others; the growth of teamwork and collaboration; the development of problem-solving skills and critical thinking; and most of all, the opportunity for our children to shine outwith the classroom. There have been so many occasions when one has witnessed a child who may have struggled within a classroom setting, come into their own when placed in the outdoor environment and their personal growth during these short visits has often been remarkable.

Scotland, as we know, is blessed with some of the most outstanding natural resources in the World and I believe firmly that as a nation, we should be encouraging our children and young people to engage with their country and environment they live in and to derive the benefits it provides for supporting physical and mental well-being.

I believe passionately that all children should have these opportunities regardless of whether they attend an independent or local authority school and I have been generally encouraged by the messages coming out from the Scottish Parliament in recent years that the outdoor education of our children in Scotland really mattered and should be an integral part of our Curriculum For Excellence, particularly in supporting children from deprived backgrounds and reducing inequality.

And yet here we are now, when following a serious plea for survival by the excellent centres we have in Scotland who deliver such invaluable experiences for our children, that you have communicated to them that no support is available and consequently, we now face the loss of these centres permanently along with the irreplaceable

expertise and knowledge of their staff. These staff cannot just find work in similar settings as these will not exist – they will need to move to other roles and occupations within the economy to ensure they can make a living. They will most likely be lost forever from the sector.

Very sadly, this process has already begun with the loss of Netherurd House near Peebles in the Borders, owned by the Girl Guides Association which last month announced its immediate closure due to an unsustainable loss of income as a consequence of the crisis and with no sources of financial support imminent or available to ensure its survival. Every year since 1999, Primary Three children at The Compass School have embarked on the most incredible adventure to Netherurd House. For some children, it has been their first overnight trip away from their parents and the rich experiences and quality of learning they have enjoyed on each and every occasion has demonstrated just exactly why outdoor education centres must exist and why every child in Scotland should benefit from them. The same staff at Netherurd have been almost ever-present during that time and now here in 2020, they have all lost their jobs and livelihoods. Netherurd House and all that it offers is tragically no more.

With the Scottish Government's refusal to support our outdoor education sector, then it is inevitable that Netherurd House will not be the last such centre to close with there being predictions that we may be about to lose almost half of outdoor centres which are predicted to close in the coming months. Whilst one appreciates that the financial resources of the Scottish Government are not infinite, one does question why a sector, the majority of which is non-profit making and which delivers such an important service for our children and the young people in Scotland, is being allowed to wither and die, whilst other sectors such as the hospitality sector (pubs and restaurants) remain supported by the Government, both directly and indirectly.

I therefore appeal to you as someone I know who has said on numerous occasions that you are passionate about ensuring that all our children and young people in Scotland enjoy the very best of opportunities to flourish, to reconsider your decision and to provide the necessary funding so to ensure that our outdoor education sector is properly supported at this critical time in order that we do not lose forever this invaluable asset for our nation and for generations of children to come.

Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature and name of the sender.

Enclosure No. 21: Email to DFM re continued closure of outdoor education centres during Covid-19

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@outlook.com>
Sent: 06 September 2020 21:00
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Scotland's Outdoor Education Centres

Dear Mr Swinney,

I am emailing you regarding the decision that Scotland's Outdoor Education Centres remain closed for residential courses until at least next spring.

I believe this is not in the interests of Scotland's children, particularly those from vulnerable backgrounds who have suffered adversely as a result of the recent lockdown in both physical and psychological terms.

I totally agree that minimising the spread of Covid 19 is a fundamental health issue which must be given priority in any decisions regarding the opening of e.g. sports or recreation centres.

It is the case however that the staff at our outdoor centres are uniquely qualified in risk management where children are concerned. It would be counter intuitive to the highly qualified staff of our centres to operate in a way which jeopardised the safety of children attending the centres or indeed the safety of the families of those children.

Such centres as you are probably aware are increasingly being viewed as unique environments in which our children can develop both physically and emotionally. These centres catering for our children, particularly those from multiple deprived backgrounds are essential in assisting in the provision of the educational, social and developmental needs of children.

It is certainly within the operational and logistical capability of our centres to offer residential courses to our children now in both a controlled and safe manner. Numbers of attendees can be reduced where necessary to maintain safe distances in the dormitories and refectories. Strict hygiene measures are the norm for such centres and can be tailored according to requirements.

This is an opportunity for the Government to act in a positive and proactive way by normalising within set safety parameters the benefits of outdoor education to our children without unnecessarily risking the spread of Covid 19.

Please consider reopening our residential outdoor centres for the wellbeing of our children.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Ayrshire

Enclosure No. 22: Letter from former outdoor education sector employee to Ms Forbes requesting support for outdoor education sector

Dear Miss Forbes MSP

I am writing to urgently ask you to consider your government offering to support Scottish outdoor Education centres that are unable to open due to the current pandemic. I spent a number of years working as an instructor at the outward Bound Trust centre, Loch Eil in your area of Lochaber. I, along with my colleagues, delivered life changing courses to students of every social group, religion and ethnicity in Scotland. We were able to offer youngsters one insight into their potential and show them no matter the circumstances if they work hard they can achieve. When we now look at the challenges facing our young people there has never been a more important time to build their resilience. They have done nothing to cause this pandemic but have suffered the most.

If we don't support centres there will be none left when they can reopen. This will cost not only vital jobs and economic benefits in remote and rural areas but rob a generation of young people the opportunity to do these courses.

I now work as a [redacted] for [redacted] in a deprived area. When I meet young people who are on the cusp of trouble, come from deprived backgrounds my first thought is that I wish they could go on an outward bound course. I watch schools, social work and the [redacted] waste vast sums of money every day offering a much worse solution. Honestly as an

Outward Bound instructor I did as much if not more good for young people than I do as a [redacted].

I understand that money is tight and the deficit high but you must find the funds to support outdoor centres before they close. Generations of young people will suffer if you don't.

Yours sincerely

From: Institute <[redacted]@outdoor-learning.org>

Sent: 11 September 2020 14:41

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: [EXTERNAL]: Support for Scottish Outdoor Education Centres

Dear Mr Swinney

The Institute for Outdoor Learning is the professional body for organisations and individuals who use the outdoors to make a difference for others. We are driven by a vision of Outdoor Learning as a highly valued form of development, education and employment in UK society. We currently have a membership of 63 organisations in Scotland

I write to you to ask that you reconsider the governments decision not to offer financial support to Scotland's residential outdoor centres. The loss of income from school residential is likely to cause many outdoor centres to close their doors and sadly with a high chance they may not be able to reopen. The permanent loss of these centres would deny future generations the opportunity of the life enriching experiences which have for so long been an integral part of Scotland's world leading education system making it 'the best place to grow up'.

Outdoor learning is a key piece of the puzzle in delivering outcomes for Curriculum for Excellence and is embedded as a 'regular and progressive experience for all learners'. As the furlough scheme comes to an end we will see many more instructors facing redundancy as the overhead is unbearable for many centres. Outdoor learning is now more important than ever in helping society to recover and rebuild from the increased inequality and mental health pressures exacerbated by COVID. The outdoor centres need support to retain their staff so that when safely able to do so they can support schools and learners.

The outdoor centres also offer a vital infrastructure for the wider outdoor learning sector providing career pathways, training, models of best practice and many jobs supporting rural economies. Outdoor instructors take years to train given the multidisciplinary and specialist nature of the work. Without this pathway we will face workforce shortages in coming years.

Scottish government has historical been big supporters of outdoor learning and the recent funded collaborative work to produce guidance for day visits has been appreciated. However, the rurality of many centres makes day visits unviable as schools would spend the best part of a day traveling to the centre.

We would ask you to:

- Continue to work with the sector to support timely revision of guidance to allow safe delivery of outdoor learning.
- Recognise that the end of the job retention scheme to protect the workforce will result in a significant reduction in centre's capacity to deliver outdoor learning.
- Reconsider a funding package for outdoor education centres, focused on protecting buildings, facilities and staff.

We look forward to your response

Kind regards

[redacted]

IOL [redacted]

Enclosure No. 24: Email to Ms Todd requesting support for residential outdoor education during Covid-19

From: [redacted] [redacted]@btinternet.com <[redacted]@btinternet.com>

Sent: 10 September 2020 00:51

To: Todd M (Maree), MSP <Maree.Todd.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: support for residential outdoor education centres

Dear Ms Todd

Support for Residential outdoor education in Scotland during the covid crisis

I write as a constituent, and as [redacted] of Scottish Environmental and Outdoor Education Centres (www.soec.org.uk) which currently operates three residential outdoor centres, delivering to an average of around 15,000 young people a year, over some 80,000 outdoor learning days. [redacted]

Originally built following the “Camps Act 1939” our centres provided for child evacuees and refugees through the Second World War, and have now been delivering residential outdoor learning and development opportunities to children and young people in Scotland for 80 years, becoming a charity in 1985.

There is a real crisis looming in the provision of such experiences. Our centres, as well as those of other providers, have been closed since lockdown. The Scottish Government now having advised that there will be no residential provision until at least 2021.

Unfortunately, it was made clear at the end of last week that the Scottish Government does not intend to provide support to residential outdoor centres during the current crisis (support that is being provided to other sectors). I am concerned this decision is likely to result in the loss of residential outdoor education provision in Scotland. A loss that I believe is clearly at odds with the Scottish Government's (admirable) ambitions for children and young people in Scotland (ACE aware, ICRC, “Realising the Ambition”, “Revised Narrative” CfE, ...). I hope that this decision might be reversed, and support provided to this important sector to ensure that Scotland's children will continue to have the opportunity to experience the benefits of residential outdoor learning.

Centres are costly to run and maintain (even when temporarily closed) and unless there is some financial assistance made available now they are likely to close for good. The measures taken to contain the virus has led to Centres being temporarily closed but the longer this goes on, the greater the likelihood of permanent closure. That would be catastrophic for children and young people in Scotland. SOEC have already suffered some £1 million loss of income in the current year.

SOEC provides some 20-25% of the total residential outdoor education provision in Scotland (as bedplaces), and we deliver real (measurable) benefits for children and young people that have been well documented elsewhere, and acknowledged by Scottish Government. The deputy First Minister has said “*I am keen to ensure that residential outdoor learning experiences continue to be part of the Curriculum for Excellence.*”

The current closures and restrictions are a necessary response to COVID. But without appropriate support may lead to the permanent closure of centres (not just SOEC, but all providers), with the likelihood that they could disappear altogether. Once they are gone, we will not be able to afford to bring them back.

Cross-party Political vision in 1939 recognised a need, and the “Camps Act” resulted in centres being built across the UK to provide for wartime needs of children and young people, but such centres also made a significant contribution to the needs of children and young people during post-war recovery, and have continued to make significant contributions to the development of children and young people in the 80 years since. I suggest that the potential contribution of residential outdoor centres to covid recovery for children and young people might bear comparison to the important contribution of the 1940's and 1950's.

And our contribution is as cost-effective as it is significant. When independently assessed for “Social return on investment” SOEC was found to deliver £11 of benefit for every £1 that comes into the charity, we believe this to be the highest in Scotland. On this basis, with our current turnover of £1.5 million, we deliver some £15 million of net benefit to Scotland. £15 million per year, every year.

Compared to what SOEC delivers in benefits to Scotland our current needs (around £400k from all sources to be in a position to resume normal activity in ,Spring 2021) might be viewed as minimal. Even our long term needs (to raise some £20 million to rebuild centres in order to serve children and young people for a further 50-80 years) represents little more than we contribute in a year. Every year.

At the beginning of 2020 we were poised to start campaigning to fund raise to rebuild centres that were built 80 years

ago. We had an entry in this year's "Parliamentary Review", and were due to be at a reception at the Scottish Parliament in June to celebrate 80 years of positive contribution of residential outdoor learning to Scotland's children and young people. And to look forward to the next 80 years.

And then coronavirus.

Now, without support for the sector it is likely that all or most residential outdoor learning provision in Scotland might simply cease to exist. A possibility that must be viewed as tragic.

I understand that the question of support for residential outdoor centres will be raised at First Minister's questions today (10th September). I would urge you to consider the benefits provided by existing provision, and the tragic loss to Scottish children and young people that would come from the closure of outdoor centres. And I hope you will add your voice to those calling for support, as has been provided for other sectors.

Yours Sincerely

[redacted]

[redacted], Scottish Environmental and Outdoor Education Centres

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Enclosure No. 25: Email to DFM requesting support for outdoor education centres

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@belltreegroup.co.uk>

Sent: 15 September 2020 09:34

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Cc: Gray I (Iain), MSP <Iain.Gray.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Support for Scotland's Outdoor Education Sector In Crisis

Dear Messer's Swinney & Gray,

I do hope that this letter finds you both well. I am writing to express my great concern at the perilous state that the outdoor education sector in Scotland finds itself today. This issue has been brought to my attention via recent BBC press coverage and the attached letters previously sent from [redacted] of Compass School and [redacted] of SAPOE.

I am sure you can both agree that there is little that is more important to the future of Scotland than the education of our children, and any comments I make cannot be more informed than those of the authors of the attached. I will say for my part that as an immigrant myself to Scotland I have been mightily impressed by the natural beauty of the country and the fantastic manner in which the wild areas of this country are appreciated by its people. This impressment is second only to the warm and generous nature I have found in Scottish people all over the country. These factors must not be taken for granted and please trust me when I say that in my travels I have seen areas of the world where a lack of appreciation for the natural environment can have the most dire effects on nature, health and wellbeing.

I urge you both to meet constructively with the relevant heads of the outdoor education industry and work together to find a solution that enables these centres to survive until the Spring term, such that we may balance the short term public health risks (lowest in children) with the generational-scale risks that will come from having a cohort of children lacking a full appreciation for how to engage positively with the natural environment and a likely permanent loss of skilled outdoor learning jobs.

Kindest Regards,

[redacted]

[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]



14-16 Jackson's Entry
The Tun, Holyrood Road
Edinburgh EH8 8PJ
SCOTLAND UK
Tel/Fax: [redacted]
Mobile: [redacted]
[\[redacted\]@belltreegroup.co.uk](mailto:[redacted]@belltreegroup.co.uk)
www.belltreegroup.co.uk

Enclosure No. 26: Letter to Ms Forbes requesting funding support for outdoor education sector

Dear Kate Forbes

I am writing to you as a grandparent living/working in Badenoch & Strathspey who is genuinely concerned about the future of Outdoor Education/Learning Residentials in Scotland. Recent media stories have highlighted the devastating impact COVID-19 has had on outdoor centres across the country, the growing concern for their survival, and the availability of outdoor residentials for future generations of young people.

In my personal experience, the benefits of a school/scout/summer etc camp/residential on myself/my children/pupils/. I worked as an Outdoor Instructor for many years at various residential centres and saw for myself first hand the enormous benefits for children both physically and mentally. This is more important than ever in our current climate of uncertainty due to climate change and global pandemic. Outdoor learning residentials are part of the fabric of the education system in Scotland. Their social and emotional benefits are widely recognised across the education and youthwork sectors and there is overwhelming evidence which attests to this.

As I watch my grandchildren in my care try and navigate their way through uncertain and worrying times I am struck by the fragility of their mental health and wellbeing. The need to provide outdoor learning opportunities to support them to develop their resilience, trust, confidence, and relationships has never been more important than it is at this moment.

The loss of outdoor residential centres will have a significant and detrimental impact on the lives of young people in Scotland, denying them opportunities for learning and development which they cannot access in the classroom. A more immediate and pressing concern is the effect on rural economies. I am aware that many centres are undergoing consultations with staff on redundancies and the recent closure of the Girlguiding Scotland's Netherurd centre will be the first of many if they do not receive financial support from the Scottish Government.

In the interests of all youth in Scotland I urge you to campaign on their behalf to secure the future of outdoor residential centres. The Scottish Government need to review their recent decision not to invest in them. Instead they should provide funding to enable them to innovate and find new ways to provide vital support to young people. With your help we request the Scottish Government to consider the following:

- Provide a funding support package that allows the outdoor sector to redeploy highly qualified staff to work with schools to support education recovery delivering meaningful outdoor education – until residential trips can restart
- Concurrently review the evidence on the safety of resuming residential trips

Thank you for your time. I hope you will attend the Members Debate taking place on the 22nd of September to discuss this important issue.

I look forward to hearing from you and how you will progress the key concerns and issues raised above.

Yours sincerely.

[redacted]

Enclosure No. 27: Email on behalf of Ardgour Community Council to DFM regarding the future of outdoor education and residentials in Scotland

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@gmail.com>
Sent: 21 September 2020 11:22
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Scottish Outdoor Education Centres

Dear Mr Swinney

I am writing to you on behalf of Ardgour Community Council regarding the future of Outdoor Education/Learning Residentials in Scotland. Recent media stories have highlighted the devastating impact COVID-19 has had on outdoor centres across the country, the growing concern for their survival, and the availability of outdoor residentials for future generations of young people.

Our community has directly been affected by this with the closing of Abernethy Ardgour School of Adventure Leadership. The closure of this centre will not only impact the children and young people who attended the centre but the wider community as well.

Outdoor learning residentials are part of the fabric of the education system in Scotland. Their social and emotional benefits are widely recognised across the education and youthwork sectors and there is overwhelming evidence which attests to this. Abernethy Ardgour regularly hosted school aged children from across Scotland for residential two to four-night stays, day events for local children/family groups and one-off courses/events for adults.

Before starting high school, the P7s from across the peninsula would come together at the centre to bond, make new friends and build confidence before their transition to high school. In our geographically challenging situation where high school students are drawn from distances of up to 50 miles this is a crucial weekend to install a new sense of community and trust. Allowing them to start high school with confidence and fellow friendly faces. For without this there is a very real possibility that a child could appear on the first day as a single child from their school due to our sparsely populated communities. We know of one child, at least, that this happened to this year.

Generally, the loss of outdoor residential centres will have a significant and detrimental impact on the lives of young people in Scotland, denying them opportunities for learning and development which they cannot access in the classroom.

A real and immediate concern for Ardgour is the effect on our rural community and economy. The closure of the centre has meant the loss of nine jobs, and potentially more importantly, the loss of nine families from our community due to all the jobs having tied housing. These families included a mix of ages and school aged children. The paucity of available housing and the current economic climate has made it incredibly difficult for these families to remain in our rural community. We will greatly feel the loss of these families across the spectrum. The centre also ran an outdoor instructor training program which brought 8-12 adults to the area for one year. These temporary residents were active in the community regularly volunteering at community events and attending the local church. Again, their loss will be felt. These examples illustrate the personal stories and wider community effect that the closure of outdoor centres will have. Real lives are being affected.

We are aware that there are many other centres undergoing consultations with staff on redundancies and discussing potential closures, should they not receive financial support from the Scottish Government. In our area alone there are two other centres at risk. It is too late for Abernethy Ardgour but we would not want to see other vulnerable communities suffer the way that we have and are.

As we try to navigate our way through these uncertain and worrying times we are all becoming more aware of our fragility. Stress levels, wellbeing and mental health, for young and old alike, are being tested by the closure or potential closure of centres. As we have explained above this not only affects those directly involved but the wider community as well. The need to provide outdoor learning opportunities to support young people to develop their resilience, trust, confidence, and relationships has never been more important than it is at this moment. Equally the need to protect and support vulnerable communities and the individuals within them should also be a priority.

In the interests of all youth, and vulnerable rural families and communities in Scotland I urge you to campaign on their behalf to secure the future of outdoor residential centres. The Scottish Government need to review their recent decision not to invest in them. Instead they should provide funding to enable them to innovate and find new ways to provide vital support. With your help we request the Scottish Government to consider the following:

- Provide a funding support package that allows the outdoor sector to redeploy highly qualified staff to work with schools to support education recovery delivering meaningful outdoor education – until residential trips can restart
- Concurrently review the evidence on the safety of resuming residential trips
- Review the situation whereby employees who were in tied housing are now faced with homelessness, and intervene where necessary

Thank you for your time. We look forward to hearing from you and how you will progress the key concerns and issues raised above. If you would like any personal stories from our community we are happy to provide them

Yours sincerely

[redacted] and [redacted]

On behalf of Ardgour Community Council

Enclosure No. 28: Email from outdoor education provider to DFM requesting support for the sector

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@activeoutdoorpursuits.com>

Sent: 20 September 2020 11:16

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Save Our Outdoor Education Centre's

Importance: High

Dear John,

I write today to raise your awareness of the challenges facing our business and our business sector.

Despite numerous pleas for help to our local MP's and MSP's our business and the Outdoor Education sector, generally, have still received no focused assistance from the Scottish or UK Governments. We find this bitterly disappointing. Outdoor Centres throughout the country play a valuable role in supporting the national education system delivering outdoor, environmental and adventure programmes that tie in with many of the aims of the curriculum for excellence and reducing the attainment gap.

When I look at businesses and sectors that are being supported I despair, to think that something as valuable and beneficial to so many is being ignored. Our sector offers wide ranging educational and health benefits to individuals, families, communities and the nation as a whole, I have to ask what are the true values of our Governments? Could it be argued that pubs and cafes are of greater importance than the education and long term health and wellbeing of our nation.

The recent guidance from the Governments on social distancing and transport has resulted in local authorities informing schools that residential school trips cannot happen this year with Spring 2021 now being the earliest possible re-start time. This action has resulted in all of our school and youth group bookings for the Autumn being cancelled, resulting in the loss of around £60,000 making our total losses now in the region of £370,000. That equates to two thirds of our annual income and there is still no certainty that we will be able to operate in the Spring of 2021! This is a massive loss for a small family owned and operated outdoor centre and one that cannot be sustained if this situation persists, another national lockdown will be our death nail if government financial support is not forthcoming to our sector.

It is estimated that no fewer than 20 Outdoor Education Centres are on a precipice. I appeal to you again to look at this sector and weigh up the cost vs benefits that it brings to our nation and society in general.

Surely it is worth saving? I appeal to you to give this sector some true focus and consideration before it is too late.

Kind Regards,

[redacted]

[redacted]

Enclosure No. 29: Letter to DFM requesting funding support for the outdoor education sector

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Emailed to

John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot

Fiona.Hyslop.msp@parliament.scot

c.c. Sarah.Madden@parliament.scot

Dear Mr Swinney & Ms Hyslop

As a [redacted] resident in their 50s, who had no opportunity to access professional outdoor education as a child, I am genuinely concerned about the future of Outdoor Education/Learning Residentials in Scotland. Recent media stories have highlighted the devastating impact COVID-19 has had on outdoor centres across the country, the growing concern for their survival, and the availability of outdoor residentials for future generations of young people.

In my personal experience, the benefits of an Outdoor education, including the opportunity to stay overnight on camp or in residential buildings, allows young people to build confidence, increase resilience, meet new people & learn new skills.

As an adult, I joined Scouting in my 30s, as a Leader, and also a volunteer Support Group member at a Scout Activity Centre. I saw the first-hand the impact on young people, BUT also experienced the amazing experience for myself. During my initial training I was given the opportunity to try all the activities. Through my school sports experience, I believed that I had no sporting ability. But I found that not to be the case and found sailing. I now own a 37ft yacht and have spent the past 6 summers sailing the west coast of Scotland and across to Northern Ireland. I have also taken part in International yacht regattas in Turkey, helping in one race where we came 3rd in our division. I also volunteer with RYA Scotland helping get information out about the opportunities for all ages and abilities in sailing. Without the opportunity to try the variety of sports offered through these Centres, many of our young people may never find "their sport". At a time where we need to help young people to be more active for their health and well-being, it is imperative that these opportunities are part of basic education. An example which sticks with me happened at a Scout Centre. I was sailing with 3 boys of around 10 years old on a dinghy for a taster sailing session. Two of the boys were "sporty" moving around the boat without any difficulty and willing to take the helm, when offered. The third one came on board but was quite resistant. He did take the helm eventually then the wind began to pick up. The boat began to heel, so I asked the kids to lean out. The two active ones didn't have the weight to make much difference, but the other lad leant out, and the boat flattened, giving us a better sail. I wish I had a picture of that moment when I witnessed the look on his face when he finally believed he could do a sport. I know that feeling.

Outdoor learning residentials are currently part of the fabric of the education system in Scotland. Their social and emotional benefits are widely recognised across the education and youthwork sectors and there is overwhelming evidence which attests to this.

PLEASE DO NOT LOOSE THEM.

My husband and I supported our niece and nephew (6 & 5 year olds) during the lockdown as their mum, an Ambulance Technician, and dad a facilities electrician, worked. We all made sure that they had the opportunity to get outdoor every day as they struggled to navigate their way through the uncertain and worrying times, their behaviour changed but they leapt back, as soon as they had more outdoor playtime with other young people. For older young people, it has been more challenging to get them outdoors daily, so we need them to have the opportunity to attend outdoor education facilities more than ever now to allow them to heal and grow. I understand the fragility of their mental health and wellbeing the restrictions have taken due to the and of opportunities to be with friends and try new things. I found my own mental wellbeing deteriorate, by not being able to sail this year, with all the life challenges going on around me.

The need to provide outdoor learning opportunities to support them to develop their resilience, trust, confidence, and relationships has never been more important than it is at this moment.

The loss of outdoor residential centres will have a significant and detrimental impact on the lives of young people in Scotland, denying them opportunities for learning and development which they cannot access in the classroom. A more immediate and pressing concern is the effect on rural economies. I am aware that

many centres are undergoing consultations with staff on redundancies and the recent closure of the Girlguiding Scotland's Netherurd centre will be the first of many if they do not receive financial support from the Scottish Government.

I am encouraged that, for now, a volunteer run Scout Centre in South Queensferry is looking to carry out development on their building so that they can offer better facilities next year. **We need our Government to have that forward thing too.**

In the interests of all youth in Scotland I urge you to campaign on their behalf to secure the future of outdoor residential centres. The Scottish Government need to review their recent decision not to invest in them. Instead they should provide funding to enable them to innovate and find new ways to provide vital support to young people. With your help we request the Scottish Government to consider the following:

- Provide a funding support package that allows the outdoor sector to redeploy highly qualified staff to work with schools to support education recovery delivering meaningful outdoor education – until residential trips can restart
- Concurrently review the evidence on the safety of resuming residential trips

Thank you for your time. I hope you will attend the Members Debate taking place on the 22nd of September to discuss this important issue.

I look forward to hearing from you and how you will progress the key concerns and issues raised above.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Enclosure No. 30: Email to DFM requesting support for outdoor education centres

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@gmail.com>

Sent: 19 September 2020 08:53

To: Colin Beattie MSP <colin.beattie.msp@parliament.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: Outdoor Education

Dear Colin and John

I am following the 'Save our Outdoor Education' campaign on twitter and signed the Change petition. I am aware that this issue will be debated in the Scottish Parliament soon and we are being encouraged to write to you about our support for keeping this vital part of our educational system in place.

I have chosen not to use the 'template' letter as I wanted to share my own experience and express why I feel these educational centres are so important.

Over 40 years ago when I started High School, I had the wonderful opportunity of going to Benmore Outdoor Centre in Argyll for the first time. This was a short weekend, where we took part in open water swimming (aka water temperature testing) canoeing, hillwalking, wood collecting and chopping and midnight walks in the hills (unknown to the teachers).

I loved it and made sure I went back at every opportunity I could. I learned to love the out doors, face up some of my fears and realised I could over come them. One visit to Benmore I remember an observer, he introduced himself by name but only at the end of our visit did he tell us why he was there. It turned out he was an researcher from the US looking at how Outdoor Education improved confidence and resilience. That always stayed with me, I never read his findings or results, but I do know that being encouraged to climb up a cliff and abseil you certainly learn to push yourself to your limits and find you can maybe go places you didn't believe - confidence and resilience building - things I know now are key for children's wellbeing both mentally and physically - what we are aspiring to give our kids today I think.

Anyway as I come to the end please understand that the Outdoor Centres teachers and guides who are so important in helping kids from all parts of life and society believe in themselves are an extremely important part of a young person's education, wherever they come from. Please help these centres stay open, so post covid our children can enjoy them again.

Yours sincerely [redacted]

Enclosure No. 31: Email from Belmont Primary School teacher to DFM requesting support for outdoor education centres

From: [redacted]

Sent: 18 September 2020 10:13

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Subject: A Message from P.7 at Belmont Primary - Scottish Outdoor Centres

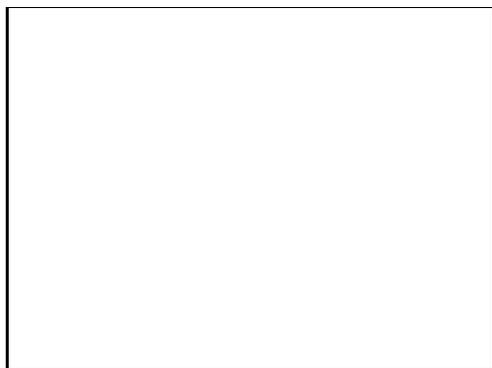
Good morning Mr. Swinney

Primary 7 pupils from Belmont Primary School in Stranraer have been developing their persuasive writing skills. They have written letters to you, in response to a BBC Scotland news article on Scottish outdoor centres facing a COVID-19 'catastrophe'. Please find attached two letters, one representing each of our two P.7 classes, written by [redacted].

I believe the letters effectively communicate the views of the children on the benefits of outdoor education centres, and in particular residential experiences. The children would like the Scottish Government to provide further guidance to outdoor centres and to reconsider its current stance on not offering financial support. At the moment Abernethy Barcaple, as an example, is able to offer day adventures. The centre would very much like to know when residential trips will be allowed, so that schools can be informed and perhaps start making bookings from January 2021. I have attached a statement from Abernethy Barcaple.

I would also like to share with you a short video which has been produced in partnership with Abernethy Outdoor Trust, the company which runs Abernethy Barcaple and one other centre in Scotland. The P.7 children recorded themselves speaking and helped to select the video clips and images which so clearly demonstrate the need for outdoor centres, such as Barcaple, to remain open.

<https://youtu.be/zlUu7Y8jaEE>



[#SaveYourOutdoorCentres](#)

P.7 pupils from Belmont Primary School (Stranraer, D&G, Scotland) and Abernethy (<https://abernethy.org.uk>) have produced this video for Mr. Swinney and the S...
youtu.be

We are immensely proud of our children's enthusiasm and involvement in putting together the letters and video. We look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your time.

[redacted]

Principal Teacher

Belmont Primary School

Galloway Avenue, Stranraer, DG9 7BH

Tel: [redacted]

Email: [redacted]@ea.dumgal.sch.uk



'We believe in the power of adventure to transform young lives. Exploring outdoors creates incredible learning opportunities and is a great way of levelling the playing field in and outside the classroom.

Outdoor adventures improve mental health and wellbeing in young people as they develop confidence in their value, realise their potential and go on to live life to the [redacted]

Every week, we see young people face new challenges, overcome fears and learn more about who they are and what they can achieve. We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to access the outdoors, especially after a prolonged period of lockdown. The pandemic has brought much uncertainty to our industry, and with no guidance from the Government past Christmas of whether residential trips will return, we can not be sure of our future, along with other outdoor centres right now.

We are proud to work with young people like those at Belmont Primary School from Stranraer. They have been coming to our Barcaple Centre in Dumfries & Galloway since 2014. We want to be able to work with many more young people like these brilliant P7s for many years to come. Please support us at this time.'



Enclosure No. 32: Email from St Paul's RC Primary School teacher cc'd to DFM re financial pressures facing outdoor education centres

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@fife.gov.uk>
Sent: 21 September 2020 16:20
To: Gilruth J (Jenny), MSP <Jenny.Gilruth.msp@parliament.scot>
Cc: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Outdoor residential centres

Good afternoon,

I have attached letters that my Primary 7 class have written to try and persuade John Swinney to help Outdoor Residential Centres financially. After reading many articles recently the pupils are very concerned that they are going to miss out on the usual Primary 7 residential trip before moving on to high school. Unless something is done to help the centres these pupils will have no chance of experiencing outdoor learning at a residential centre in years to come.

Kind regards

[redacted]

St Paul's RC Primary School
Rimbleton Avenue
Glenrothes
KY6 2AT

Phone: [redacted]

Enclosure No. 33: Email cc'd to DFM raising concerns about the future of outdoor education and residential in Scotland

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@hotmail.com>
Sent: 24 September 2020 07:20
To: MacDonald G (Gordon), MSP <Gordon.MacDonald.msp@parliament.scot>
Cc: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Re: Please help Save Scotland's Outdoor Education

Hi Gordon

I was hoping to hear back from you about this.

Thanks
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]

On 19 Sep 2020, at 08:57, [redacted] <[redacted]@hotmail.com> wrote:

Dear Mr MacDonald,

I am writing to you as a parent living in [redacted] who is genuinely concerned about the future of Outdoor Education/Learning Residential in Scotland.

Recent media stories have highlighted the devastating impact COVID-19 has had on outdoor centres across the country, the growing concern for their survival, and the availability of outdoor residential for future generations of young people.

In my personal experience, the benefits of school residential stays on myself as a child, and now seeing the immense benefit and enjoyment of Beaver camps for my young children remains an essential part for children growing up.

In addition, in a professional capacity through my work in Midlothian, it is also clear how essential the need for outdoor education opportunities are for children from deprived areas who otherwise would never have these opportunities and life experiences.

Outdoor learning residential are part of the fabric of the education system in Scotland. Their social and emotional benefits are widely recognised across the education and youth work sectors and there is overwhelming evidence which attests to this.

As I watch my own children try and navigate their way through uncertain and worrying times I am struck by the fragility of their mental health and wellbeing. The need to provide outdoor learning opportunities to support them to develop their resilience, trust, confidence, and relationships has never been more important than it is at this moment.

The loss of outdoor residential centres will have a significant and detrimental impact on the lives of young people in Scotland, denying them opportunities for learning and development which they cannot access in the classroom.

A more immediate and pressing concern is the effect on rural economies. I am aware that many centres are undergoing consultations with staff on redundancies and the recent closure of the Girlguiding Scotland's Netherurd centre will be the first of many if they do not receive financial support from the Scottish Government.

In the interests of all youth in Scotland I urge you to campaign on their behalf to secure the future of outdoor residential centres.

The Scottish Government need to review their recent decision not to invest in them. Instead they should provide funding to enable them to innovate and find new ways to provide vital support to young people. With your help we request the Scottish Government to consider the following:

- Provide a funding support package that allows the outdoor sector to redeploy highly qualified staff to work with schools to support education recovery delivering meaningful outdoor education – until residential trips can restart

- Concurrently review the evidence on the safety of resuming residential trips

Thank you for your time. I hope you will attend the Members Debate taking place [on the 22nd of September](#) to discuss this important issue.

I look forward to hearing from you and how you will progress the key concerns and issues raised above.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

[redacted] resident

Enclosure No. 34: Email from primary school teacher to DFM requesting support for outdoor education centres

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@aberdeenshire.gov.uk>

Sent: 23 September 2020 17:50

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: OUTDOOR EDUCATION OUTWARDBOAUND CENTRES

Dear Mr Swinney,

I hope that the government will provide support to enable outward bound centres and sports leaders to survive and continue to provide the amazing service they do for our young people. They are very important in our work to wards equity in our education system and society.

As a primary teacher I know that although we try to provide as many experiences and challenges in school as we can, many of our young people will not have the range of confidence building activities and experiences that others do. Children who have never been to a museum, library or a beach or on a boat. Who don't have chances outside school to join social clubs and sports clubs, don't go on holiday or have sleepovers with friends.

Outward bound facilities and sports leaders provide experiences and challenges that children never forget. They provide the bonding opportunities of supporting each other in challenges and competition and allow them to meet children from outside their own communities. They provide stress release and show young people constructive ways to cope with stress, feel the benefits of working together and trusting one another and also to find healthy thrills. We need more of them and we need to keep the skilled people who work in them.

Please do everything you can to support these groups throughout the covid epidemic.

[redacted]

Enclosure No. 35: Letter from YouthLink Scotland to Richard Lochhead re financial challenges facing outdoor education sector

Rosebery House
9 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh
EH12 5EZ
T: 0131 313 2488
E: info@youthlinkscotland.org
W: www.youthlinkscotland.org



YouthLink Scotland is a company limited by guarantee.
Registered in Scotland No: 164547.
Charity Ref: SC003923

29 September 2020

By email only

Richard Lochhead
Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Richard

I wanted to write to you about the situation facing outdoor centres, specifically those third sector organisations and members of YouthLink Scotland who offer a programme of youth work activity to schools and community groups. The debate in the Scottish Parliament on 21 December and the [#SaveScottishOutdoorCentres](#) petition which has now been signed by over 21,000 people, underlines the deep value that Scottish society places on the benefits of this provision, something I know that you attested to personally during the debate.

I do not wish to restate all of the points made during the debate but I do think the [letter to MSP's](#) from the Office of the Children and Young People's Commissioner highlighting the importance of outdoor residential centres positive effect on addressing the "*grave physical, emotional and psychological effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on children*" is very compelling. Outdoor education centres are part of the [fabric of Scottish education](#) and should be seen as a vital cog in the wheel of the [wider learning estate](#). The economic benefits of this provision are real and as we think about the interconnectedness of outdoor centres with the [wellbeing economy](#), we can begin to see the importance of ensuring that the next generation of young adults will have the necessary social and emotional literacy to create the new jobs we will need in recovery.

The issue of the funding gap was identified early on by the sector in our [Youth Work Sector Leaders Report](#). In normal times the outdoor sector is financially viable demonstrating the value placed on these experiences by schools, teachers, youth organisations, youth workers and parents, but due to COVID-19 restrictions centres cannot operate, and many (over 50%) will be closed by mid-2021. This loss to the education estate and loss of opportunity for future generations cannot be contemplated.

I'm very mindful that the Scottish Government's civil servants have already met with representatives from the sector and have offered help and solutions to the problem. [Guidance](#) was developed with the Scottish Government and SAPOE, with YouthLink Scotland, AHOEC and Education Scotland involved, to encourage the safe return of school visits to outdoor centres. There has also been advice given on loans that the sector can apply for. The Scottish Government has also signposted the Third Sector Resilience Fund.

However, it is clear that despite the intention to help, none of these measures meets the need specifically for this group of third sector outdoor education centres. The [Third Sector Resilience Fund](#) seems the most likely fund designed for the purpose of sustaining organisations who have been temporarily affected by a substantial income drop due to COVID-19, however the criteria has prevented organisations from accessing the fund, something we had identified in the [Youth Work Sector Leaders Report](#).

The situation has been exacerbated by the end of the furlough scheme which we appreciate is a UK government decision and we would very much support any effort to engage with the UK government to recognise the viability of outdoor education jobs in the longer term. However, the Scottish Government does need to act now to prevent the loss of a much loved part of Scotland's education estate. As £25 million has been announced recently by the Scottish Government, I would urge a new look at how some of that funding could be designated to meet this pressing need, and prevent the closure of many centres.

Yours sincerely



Enclosure No. 36: Email and letter from several organisations to DFM outlining their support for the #saveyouroutdoorcentres campaign

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@mountaineering.scot>

Sent: 01 October 2020 09:30

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Cc: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>

Subject: Scottish Governing Bodies of Sport - Support for #SaveYourOutdoorCentres campaign

FAO John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Cc Richard Lochhead MSP, Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science

Joe Fitzpatrick MSP, Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing

Dear Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills,

I attach a letter for your consideration which has been sent on behalf of the following organisations:

- Mountaineering Scotland
- Ramblers Scotland
- Scottish Cycling
- Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland
- Royal Yachting Association Scotland
- Orienteering Scotland
- Scottish Canoe Association
- Snowsport Scotland
- Scottish Fencing and Scottish Archery
- Scottish Curling

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

[redacted]

Tel: [redacted] | Email: [redacted]@mountaineering.scot

Love Scotland's mountains? Join us

www.mountaineering.scot



The Granary | West Mill Street | Perth | PH1 5QP
T: 01738 493 942 E: info@mountaineering.scot
www.mountaineering.scot

1 October 2020

John Swinney MSP

T4.23
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills,

Scottish Governing Bodies of Sport - Support for #SaveYourOutdoorCentres campaign

We are writing to the Scottish Government to express our collective support for the campaign to ensure that outdoor centres survive the current crisis and continue to provide invaluable life and learning experiences for children and young people across Scotland. Scottish outdoor centres have played a significant part in the provision of both proficiency training and coach education for several decades, and their loss will be keenly felt within the Scottish Governing Bodies of Sport programmes.

105,000 young people are given the chance to try sailing, canoeing, snowsports, cycling, mountain biking, climbing, kayaking and hillwalking every year. The workforce based in these 36 centres are specialists, and it takes considerable time, commitment and expense to train them to deliver these activities safely.

We understand the difficult decisions Government is having to make and have welcomed the additional funding provided by both Scottish and Westminster Governments in some areas, however this funding does not yet address the significant challenge of keeping these centres open. These centres are a resource which is evidenced to help to close the attainment gap, develop resilience, confidence and life skills, whilst improving the physical and mental health & wellbeing of children and young people from all over Scotland.

This year as we have emerged from lockdown outdoor sports have worked together to provide detailed advice and guidance to help people resume outdoor activities safely whilst also working to promote responsible access. It is clear that we have seen an increase in interest in outdoor recreation this summer, a trend which is likely to continue. More than ever we need opportunities for future generations to learn to how to enjoy, appreciate and behave responsibly in the outdoors.

Adventure tourism is also an important part of the Scottish economy, and these centres play a critical role in providing employment opportunities in some of the most rural parts of Scotland.

Centres have already begun to close, and this will accelerate when the furlough scheme ends with 50% of Scotland's 36 Centres likely to close and half of their 600 employees at risk of redundancy in the coming months. Without a support package these Outdoor Education Centres will be lost forever.

There is a history of outdoor centres being closed (including many owned by local authorities) with no opportunity for community buy out, or to look into alternative operating models, the buildings then being demolished or used for housing, or the land sold for redevelopment. There is a significant risk that this trend will continue, and young people across Scotland will be denied the opportunity to access residential outdoor experiences that have been identified by MSPs as being so important for Scottish children and young people.

We understand that representatives from the #SaveYourOutdoorCentres campaign are in the process of arranging to discuss the situation with Ministers and hope this will provide a better understanding of the position of both the centres, and the Scottish Government. We fully support the campaign in their efforts and welcome any assistance that the Scottish Government may be able to provide to ensure this important sector survives the current crisis.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]
[redacted]

Enclosure No. 37: Email from W L Gore & Associates (UK) Holding Co Ltd outlining its support for the #saveyouroutdoorcentres campaign

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@wlgore.com>

Sent: 01 October 2020 15:45

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@wlgore.com>; [redacted] <[redacted]@wlgore.com>

Subject: Save our outdoor centres campaign

Good afternoon,

Please find attached a letter for Mr Swinney in regard to our support for the 'Save our outdoor centres campaign'.

Kind regards,

[redacted] (on behalf of WL Gore & Associates)

[redacted]

W.L. Gore & Associates (UK) Holding Company Ltd.

R&D | Fabrics Division

direct: [redacted]

mobile: [redacted]

[redacted]@wlgore.com

Simpson Parkway

Kirkton Campus

Livingston EH54 7BH

UK

gore.com

The Scottish Government
St Andrews House
Regent Road
EH1 3DG, Edinburgh

1st October 2020

Subject: Save Scotland's Outdoor Centres Campaign

Dear Mr Swinney:

I write to you today in my capacity as a [REDACTED] of W. L. Gore & Associates (UK) Ltd to express my support for the **Save Scotland's Outdoor Centres Campaign**.

I appreciate that you will already be aware of the crucial role that Outdoor Centres play in providing employment, supporting communities, providing invaluable experiences to young people and aiding their personal development, and helping to deliver the Curriculum for Excellence health and well-being outcomes.

However, I would like to take a moment to briefly outline our experience of working with Outdoor Centres, and to highlight the less-well known role that they play in supporting the Scottish business sector.

For more than 20 years R&D Associates from Gore's Fabrics Division based in Livingston have worked in partnership with the Outward Bound Centre at Loch Eil to develop many of the GORE-TEX products currently available in the markets globally. The instructors and students at Loch Eil have worked with us to test our technologies in challenging conditions, in a safe, discrete and thoughtful manner.

This has been invaluable to us in our pursuit of developing best in class outdoor products. In return, we have been able to support Loch Eil through donation of funds and equipment, and mentoring of young people through the Outward Bound Next Generation scheme.

Our partnership is a success story both for Scottish innovation and the outdoor education sector, and our experience has certainly helped us to appreciate the diverse ways in which Outdoor Centres play a role in supporting Scotland's economy as well as the education and personal development of our young people.

Whilst we certainly appreciate the need to proceed cautiously and to have the health of individuals and the community at the heart of decision-making, we would also urge a focus on long-term impacts. In particular, we encourage the Scottish Government to work with the sector in the development of a survival and recovery plan to help support the centres through this difficult period, and to bring forward the review currently scheduled for December.

I appreciate the difficulties that you, and the Scottish Government, face at this unprecedented time, but believe there is scope to work with the sector to both respond to immediate challenges and simultaneously help lay the foundations for a successful recovery.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
W L Gore & Associates (UK) Holding Company Limited.

Enclosure No. 38: Email from a primary school pupil to DFM requesting support for outdoor education and residential in Scotland

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@hotmail.com>

Sent: 02 October 2020 11:33

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Letter to Mr Swinney from [redacted], age 11 about Scottish Outdoor Education Centres

Dear Mr.Swinney,

I am [redacted], age 11 and I have been looking forward to my residential all year and so have all my classmates. My residential was supposed to happen next year in 2021 but now that might not happen if you don't try to help save Scottish Outdoor Education Centres. An outdoor education centre near me has just been told it must close due to financial issues. SOEC is a non profit organisation, which means it is a lot more affordable for children in poorer communities. Since the SOEC will close by the end of the month a child's opportunity for a residential has gone away just like that and so will many others. I would hate to see that happen.

I moved school in Primary 5, and I was really disappointed to hear that my old school's residential has just been cancelled due to Covid 19. My best friend still goes there and she is gutted that she will not get to have this great experience and so is everyone else. Closing these centres is unacceptable and it is completely unfair that all of the children in primary right now and all of the children to come will have no choice but to miss out.

My older sister [redacted] is now in second year at high school. She went on her residential in primary 7 and she expressed what a great time she had and that it was an amazing experience. She also said that her residential gave her the opportunity to learn many life skills which have and will help her throughout her lifetime. I think that everyone would hate to see all of these children miss out on this unique and important experience.

I don't understand why you are not helping these outdoor centres and why you won't support them. A residential is part of the curriculum. It is like you saying we have to give up English or Maths so why do we have to give up our residential? You have to understand how important this is to everyone. If you don't start helping soon it will be too late and no child will ever get a residential again.

How would you feel if you were my age again and this was happening to you? I'm sure you would feel sad and frustrated and write a letter like this too. It is just so important to every one but we will be even more upset if you don't even try.

I know that we are only children but our opinion matters just as much as yours, so please take this into consideration and help.

Yours sincerely, [redacted].

[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]

Enclosure No. 39: Letter from Moray House School of Education to FM requesting short and long-term support for outdoor education centres

5th October 2020

Dear First Minister

The crisis facing Scotland's Outdoor Education Centres

My apologies for the following paragraph, but for context I should introduce myself and explain my interest and involvement in these issues. I have worked with MSPs and Ministers since the early days of the Parliament¹. More recently, I was appointed to Chair the Learning for Sustainability Advisory and Implementation Groups (2011-2016) for ██████████ - which developed the concept of Learning for Sustainability (Lfs), now embedded in Scottish educational policy. I continue to support these developments through the Learning Directorate, and when appropriate directly with DFM John Swinney. Previously I worked with Mike Russell in his roles in education and environment - on outdoor learning, land reform and as a member of the Strategic Review of the National Parks System. Following many years working in outdoor learning (including in outdoor centres) I have for the past 25 years or so taught at the University of Edinburgh in what is arguably the leading group of academics working on 'outdoor learning' and 'learning for sustainability' in the world.

The Scottish approach taken to outdoor learning (OL) is internationally regarded as both evidence-informed and world-leading. I am writing to you now because I think we are at a crisis point regarding OL provision, and specifically residential outdoor education. I will detail my concerns below, but in essence I (and my colleagues) fear the loss of aspects of provision that are highly significant to our connection to the land and landscape of Scotland - and essentially, who we are as a nation - something profoundly important to cherish and support as we look beyond Covid-19.

Benefits of Outdoor Learning

First, I should highlight the evidence of the benefits of OL. My colleagues and I (and others all over the world) have demonstrated that OL:

- facilitates children's development in school grounds, local areas and on residential courses;
- supports learning in all aspects of the school curriculum from 3 to 18;
- provides opportunities for pupils to guide their own learning and develop critical thinking skills in ways elusive in the classroom;

¹ I worked initially with ██████████ and then ██████████ on outdoor education, and jointly wrote Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning for the Scottish Government.

- raises children's awareness of environmental and sustainability issues, resulting in understanding and promoting an ethic of care for our planet (directly linked with the concept of 'Learning for Sustainability' - a high priority in Scottish education policy);
- has direct health and wellbeing benefits; and
- provides unique opportunities for personal development and environmental awareness through high-quality curriculum-focussed residential centre provision.

Further, my colleague [REDACTED] and I have just completed a Commissioned Report for the Learning Directorate on the 'Educational Outcomes of Learning for Sustainability'². This review of the international literature is clear in evidencing (a) the broad educational benefits, specifically of time spent learning outdoors, and (b) the impact of LfS on positive sustainability attitudes and behaviours. Recognition of this value is evident in your highly progressive policy on Early Learning and Childcare, with outdoor learning outlined as an expectation of provision in the commitment.

The context and benefits of Outdoor Centre provision

Scotland's residential outdoor centres have been the envy of many other nations for well-over 50 years, providing extremely valuable learning experiences for our young people. The educational, health and wellbeing, and personal development evidence of these benefits (as above) is irrefutable, with much of the research coming from Scotland. This is fully accepted by the Scottish Government which has done a great deal to support world-leading outdoor, environmental and sustainability education - recognised as an *entitlement* for young people to experience progressive outdoor learning and learning for sustainability. Much of this can be provided locally from schools, but outdoor centres support the curriculum, provide further broadening experiences, and an opportunity for many young people to get to know other parts of their country - particularly so for those in inner-cities who would otherwise lack the means to visit them.

A number of residential outdoor centres have closed in recent years, and I know you are aware of recent ones. This seems to be the unintended consequences of the budgetary constraints within Local Authorities, the pressures schools experience, and responses of council and school leaders to these. Before Covid-19 arrived, this had already placed residential outdoor centre provision in some local authority areas in a precarious position, and in some, absent altogether: plainly an educational and social inequity.

I know from your recent statement that you and your Ministers understand the crisis the sector faces, so I will just make a few summary points:

- as schools and many other sectors emerge from Covid-restrictions, outdoor education centres are unable to do so, given the ***particular restrictions they face concerning transport and residential accommodation;***
- this will be made far worse by ***the long lead-in time before schools can book courses, raise funds, organise transport and staffing;***
- most providers are nearing the limit of their reserves, and it no exaggeration to say that ***the majority are likely to close permanently*** if there is no review leading to relaxation of

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/educational-outcomes-learning-sustainability-brief-review-literature/>

See also: Higgins, P., Thompson, D. & Rawcliff, P. (2018). *Learning outside the classroom boosts educational attainment*. Scottish Natural Heritage Science Newsletter, Issue 23, p. 7-9. Perth: Scottish Natural Heritage.

Kuo, M., Browning, M. & Penner, M. (2018). Do lessons in nature boost subsequent classroom engagement? Refuelling students in flight. *Frontiers in Psychology*. (8)2253.

restrictions for school travel and attendance, and financial support when the furlough scheme comes to an end;

- the consequences of such closures will not only be for the young people deprived of the opportunity to attend courses - the majority are located in rural areas of Scotland where their ***year-round employment contributes significantly to the local economy***. (My research indicates most centres generate direct income, spent locally, of something of the order of £600k-£1M per year); and
- at a time when ***children and young people desperately need these learning and developmental opportunities***, which cannot be provided locally, it would be a tragedy to lose the residential centres that provide them.

What needs to be done to support Outdoor Centre provision?

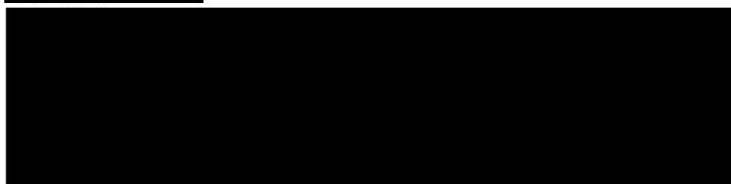
In any previous role in providing advice to Government I have always resisted asking for money, but in the short-term, ***there is absolutely no doubt that some form of funding package is necessary to help centres survive***. Without this they will surely fold - and facilities and expertise that has taken generations to develop will be lost. In addition, it is necessary to reassure pupils, parents, teachers and local authority staff by the following:

- Many if not all providers have made their facilities as 'Covid-secure' as practical, with opportunities for groups to live and work in 'bubbles'. This needs to be recognised and made evident to relevant parties (as above).
- Transport, again in 'bubbles' would permit groups to reach the centres. A brief review of this is necessary, and clarity provided over the conditions by which transport can take place.
- A clear statement that schools and local authorities are encouraged to send groups (under specified conditions) would help considerably.

In the longer term, I suggest as I have previously, that *a substantial review is undertaken to examine the contribution of outdoor centres to the education and development of children and young people*. Such a review should focus on alignment with the broader purposes of education in Scotland, and the means of ensuring both educational quality and long-term funding models.

Without both the short- and longer-term support I am fearful that this continued decline will not be halted and we will lose highly effective cherished provision, that helps young people to develop in many ways, including understanding sustainability, valuing biodiversity and developing a love of their landscape, seascape and cultural heritage of Scotland.

Yours sincerely



Copies to:

DFM John Swinney MSP (Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills)

Richard Lochhead MSP (Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science)