Dear James,

I read with interest the recent letter from Graeme Dey, Convenor of the ECCLR Committee, to you asking if you have any plans to consider climate change and biodiversity as part of the work you are doing on the Curriculum for Excellence.

Scottish Natural Heritage leads on three areas of work which I think will interest the Education and Skills Committee. These are our work in Learning in Local Greenspace, our ReRoute Youth Advisory Group and the Teaching in Nature initiative.

Learning in Local Greenspace

This project aims to help 100 schools, in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Scotland, to get their pupils learning outdoors on a regular basis. This will be achieved by improving the access to, and quality, of a local greenspace and building confidence in teachers to take learning outdoors.

The project will involve addressing barriers that currently prevent frequent outdoor learning across the curriculum, and is a partnership project working between schools, local authorities and a range of local and national environmental organisations. It is supported by Education Scotland and the Scottish Government.

The outcomes of the project sought include:
- Pupils’ entitlement to regular outdoor learning experiences at all stages of learning is realised
- Pupils are more connected to their natural environment and health and wellbeing is improved
- School attainment is raised
- Local greenspaces are improved for local communities and biodiversity is enhanced
The outputs/ deliverables will vary from school to school depending on their requirements but will include:

- Greenspaces are more accessible from school grounds and quality improved
- Teachers have increased confidence to take learning outdoors
- Teaching resources and equipment have been sourced
- A range of project resources and reports made available to enable others to use.

ReRoute - our Young People's Advisory Group

As part of our Scottish Biodiversity Strategy 2020 Challenge and route map work we have set up a new three year partnership with Young Scot to engage with young people.

The core element of the partnership is the establishment of a young people’s advisory group, made up of 16 young volunteers aged between 14 -23 from a variety of representative and relevant backgrounds and experiences across Scotland. The group is called ReRoute. To facilitate and run this work we have employed, through Young Scot, a partnership officer for the duration of the project.

The objectives of the partnership are:

- To engage young people in considering the SBS strategy and route map and what it means for young people.
- To develop an effective package to support young people to connect with the SBS and route map, and to connect with the natural world and take part in activities that seek to support, protect and restore a healthy local environment.
- Young people to update and provide challenge to SNH and Scottish Government on progress with the SBS and route map.

Teaching in Nature

SNH's Teaching in Nature Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) programme has been running since 2012. It was accredited by the General Teaching Council for Scotland in 2014, meaning teachers can gain Professional Recognition in Outdoor Learning by taking part. The programme matches groups of teachers (the experts in the curriculum) with sites and their managers/owners (the experts in the place). The teachers work collaboratively, alone and with other colleagues; on site, in school and online over the course of 18 months.

As well as giving the teachers and their learners (nearly 950 in 2012/13 alone) first-hand experience of biodiversity, the programme considers relevant research and the wider Learning for Sustainability agenda.

A number of partner organisations (Cairngorms National Park Authority; Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority and Grounds for Learning) now also offer the Teaching in Nature Programme in partnership with SNH. An impact study found that the majority of respondents (80%) had continued to take learning outdoors during the year that followed their Teaching in Nature CLPL and 73% had supported a colleague to do so too.
SNH led research

We would welcome the further consideration of climate change and biodiversity in the curriculum, including at Secondary level. Our research indicates that secondary schools participate in outdoor learning less than nursery and primary schools.

Please do not hesitate to contact me, I and SNH colleagues would be very happy to discuss this important area of work further.

Yours sincerely,

W.J. (Ian) Ross
Chairman

Cc Roz Thomson, Graeme Dey and Lynn Tullis