



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Natalie Don-Innes MSP
Minister for Children, Young People
and the Promise
Scottish Government

Liz Smith CBE MSP
Scottish Parliament

By email

1 May 2025

Dear Minister

Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill – Financial Resolution

Thank you for a constructive meeting on Tuesday 29 April to discuss next steps in relation to the above Bill. I am encouraged that we are making progress. I was pleased to hear that you are now giving consideration to lodging a motion for a Financial Resolution, and that there is scope for discussion about reduced costs.

Following the meeting I thought it would be helpful to follow up on the following:

- The [Committee's Stage 1 report](#) made recommendations to address concerns including the financial aspects of this Bill. In this context, at Tuesday's meeting your officials made reference to additional costs arising from the Bill. You previously estimated the cost of the Bill to be between £24.3 million to £40.6 million, figures which you provided to the Parliament in your [Memorandum of 3 September 2024](#). On Tuesday, you indicated that you now consider that the costs are likely to be higher than those estimates, and agreed to provide me with the revised estimates and the workings and assumptions underpinning them, in order that I can consider them carefully. Those revised estimates, and the costings underpinning them, should also be provided to the Education, Children and Young People Committee, as the lead committee which scrutinised the Bill at Stage 1.
- On universal funding (as my Bill currently provides for in section 1 (inserted [section 6C](#) to the 1980 Act)), the Committee's Stage 1 report recommended that the Scottish Government should liaise with me as Member in Charge to consider whether the aim of universal provision of residential outdoor education can retain a place for parental contributions and local fundraising ([paragraph](#)

[210](#)), and on alternative funding models ([paragraphs 211 and 212](#)). I indicated at our meeting on Tuesday that I am open to considering proposals to allow parental contributions and local fundraising and would welcome further discussion where you can outline ways this can be achieved. Of course, any proposals for amendments to the Bill that move away from universal funding would have to retain a focus on equity, especially in ensuring that full participation of pupils with complex additional support needs can be achieved, regardless of the ability of their parents to afford to send their children on residential outdoor education trips.

- In relation to the funding provision in the Bill (inserted [section 6C](#) to the 1980 Act), I made a number of suggestions during the course of the stage 1 process on how this funding could be secured by the Scottish Government (see for example my letter to the [lead committee](#) on alternative funding models). During [Stage 1 evidence](#), I also pointed to other examples of statutory obligations (for example the legal duty to manage prisons in Scotland) being delivered with support from private sources. Furthermore, I am aware that the Deputy First Minister and the Minister for Public Finance have previously stated that the Scottish Government is looking at ways to ensure there is better co-operation between the public and private sectors in respect of joint funding of infrastructure projects. As mentioned at the meeting on Tuesday, I wish to ascertain what the position is in relation to this Bill, and whether residential outdoor education forms part of the Scottish Government's thinking in this regard. You indicated that you would come back to me on this point, and I would welcome further discussion on it.
- We had a brief discussion about Pupil Equity (PEF) funding, and the extent to which the Scottish Government would be willing to explore the use of such funding for implementing my Bill, particularly given that, in Edinburgh, around 62% of such funding is already spent on residential outdoor education, and in light of the carry-over of such funding across Scotland. I consider that it would be entirely appropriate and possible to use PEF funding in this context. I would therefore welcome further discussion about the extent to which the Scottish Government considers such funding could be used for the provision for residential outdoor education.
- You intimated your concern that the Government would not be in a position to upscale provision of residential outdoor education by the time this Bill is due to be commenced. I have previously indicated a willingness to lodge an amendment in relation to the commencement date for the Bill to come into force, as I recognise that there are some issues that will need to be addressed, in particular in relation to providing for children with complex additional support needs. I restated my willingness to change the commencement date to enable appropriate preparations to be made.
- In paragraph 160 of its report, the Committee recommended that the Scottish Government should provide its view as to whether the right to one week's residential outdoor education would be required to be considered by the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers, and I am happy to support you as you reach a position on that matter. On that basis, I would be content to

meet COSLA to hear its views. You indicated that your officials would assist my office to set up a meeting.

Thank you again for your time yesterday, and I reiterate that I found the meeting to be constructive. I would be grateful if you or your officials could provide me with the information noted above in relation to your revised costing as soon as possible. I would also welcome a progress meeting towards the end of May.

I am copying this letter to Douglas Ross MSP, Convener of the Education, Children and Young People Committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liz Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Liz Smith CBE MSP