



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

Liz Smith CBE MSP  
Scottish Parliament

By email

12 August 2025

Dear Minister

### **Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill**

Thank you for meeting me this morning (12th August). I am now writing to confirm the following points from our meeting:

- The Scottish Government does not have a position on any of the policy proposals set out in my letter of 31 July 2025, including proposals to initially apply the bill to primary school pupils only and/or to target provision to children and young people experiencing poverty and those with additional support needs;
- The Scottish Government has not carried out any work in order to establish a figure, or a range of figures, for the cost of implementation of the Bill that it would consider to be 'affordable';
- The Scottish Government has not initiated any financial modelling on any of the policy proposals set out by me, or indeed undertaken any further financial modelling in relation to any policy proposals it might have to implement the Bill in a way the Scottish Government considers to be affordable;
- The Scottish Government has not produced its own policy proposals, and therefore has not commissioned the drafting of any amendments to inform our negotiations despite your commitment before the Education, Children and Young People Committee to provide amendments by the start of July;
- Instead of prioritising work on a Bill agreed at Stage 1 by Parliament, the Scottish Government has been undertaking some modelling work with associated costings to inform a possible pursuit of a non-legislative solution involving a pilot (costs of £6 to 8 million were mentioned);
- The Scottish Government could not confirm a date for Cabinet (or the Cabinet sub-committee on legislation) to consider whether to lodge a financial

resolution for the Bill. I would ask for confirmation of this date as soon as possible;

- You responded to my request for a further meeting during recess, to establish and discuss the outcome of your meeting on 12 August with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, by suggesting there would not be merit in a further meeting until the Cabinet had reached its final decision in September;
- I highlighted my intention to hold a member's business debate in early September, the potential for further scrutiny from the Education, Children and Young People Committee and, in addition, I will of course consider other means to highlight these matters within the normal parliamentary process; and
- Finally, you and your officials acknowledged my team's procedural point that the financial resolution process should solely focus on affordability. Issues relating to commencement and other matters that may require stage 2 amendments can be the focus of the later stages of parliamentary scrutiny.

As I think was clear in the meeting, I am increasingly concerned - as is the outdoor education sector - that the huge amount of work which has gone into this valuable bill is going to fall by the wayside if the Scottish Government does not lodge a financial resolution in the very near future. The Bill will fall on 26 September in the absence of such a resolution.

Beyond the clear educational need for this Bill which I have stated on so many occasions in the last three years, as a parliamentarian I am concerned that a failure to establish agreement on the lodging of a financial resolution will mean the will of Parliament at Stage 1 has not been upheld.

I am copying this letter to the Convener of the Education, Children and Young People Committee, the First Minister, the Deputy First Minister, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government for their reference.

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**