

CABINET STATEMENT

Written Statement: The Welsh Government Statement on Establishing a Fund for the Residential Outdoor Education (RoE) Sector

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Today we are pleased to jointly announce that a fund will be established to support the residential outdoor education sector in Wales with an initial allocation of £2m. This fund will provide eligible centres across Wales with support to cover essential operating costs during the period June to September 2021.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected residential outdoor education centres in Wales, as it has in other nations. Many settings have not been able to resume provision of outdoor learning since March 2020. Due to the ongoing pandemic and measures in place to reduce the transmission of the virus, outdoor residential centres are likely to continue to be affected. This not only impacts on the centres, their staff and the economy of the local communities in which they are based, but it also impacts on children and young people who benefit from these residential educational experiences.

Prior to the pandemic, thousands of Welsh school children would benefit from the educational experiences and opportunities that these residential centres provide for children and young people. They provide expert-led learning outside the classroom and recognised wellbeing benefits. Adventurous education is unique in a young person's journey through school, and these learning experiences are so highly valued that parents pay for them, and teachers and specialists give time willingly to ensure these experiences are enriching.

Residential outdoor education experiences will play an important role in supporting the roll-out of the new curriculum for Wales, and the work providers undertake will continue to make a valuable contribution to many local economies as we begin to emerge carefully from COVID-19 restrictions.

We have listened carefully to the concerns of the sector, and the particular challenges in relation to residential outdoor education experiences. Whilst many organisations in the sector have accessed Welsh Government support during the pandemic, there is a need to ensure support continues to be available when necessary. A fund will therefore be established to support the residential outdoor education sector in Wales.

Further details on the Fund, including when it will be open to applicants, will be released in May.

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