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Douglas Ross MSP
Convener
Education, Children and Young People
Committee
Scottish Parliament
By email: ecyp.committee@parliament.scot

Our ref: Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill

24 September 2025

Dear Convenor,

SCHOOLS (RESIDENTIAL OUTDOOR EDUCATION) (SCOTLAND) BILL: GOVERNMENT'S POSITION ON THE FINANCIAL RESOLUTION

I am writing to you in follow up to my recent appearance at Committee on 10 September to inform you of the Scottish Government's formal position on the Financial Resolution for the Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill.

Role of Residential Outdoor Education

Firstly, I want to reiterate the Scottish Government's ongoing recognition of the important role that outdoor learning, in all its forms, including residential outdoor education, can play in supporting the development of our children and young people. This is reflected in our refreshed Learning for Sustainability Action Plan published in 2023, ongoing work with the Scottish Outdoor Learning Strategic Working Group, and financial initiatives such as Pupil Equity Funding and the Learning Estates Investment Programme.

Position on the Financial Resolution

Over the last six months, I and my officials have engaged extensively with Liz Smith MSP, as the Member in Charge, as well as key delivery partners including COSLA, the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES), and teacher trade unions regarding this Bill. These engagements have confirmed the Government's concerns relating to affordability and deliverability – including around equity of provision, workplace implications and capacity of the sector – building on our earlier assessment and that of the Education, Children & Young People (ECYP) Committee in its Stage 1 Report.

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Recognising the will of parliament to see the Bill progress, I am pleased to confirm that the **Scottish Government has today lodged a motion for a Financial Resolution for this Bill.**

However, the outstanding concerns remain to be addressed and **Parliament now has a responsibility to ensure that this Bill, should it become law, is affordable and is deliverable.** This will need to include further considering the total potential costs of the Bill, equity of provision, capacity of the sector and workforce implications. Indeed, the ECYP Committee concluded in its own Stage 1 Report that the Bill should only progress if such concerns were addressed.

Stage 2 Proceedings

I am reassured by the Member in Charge's willingness and commitment to work with the Scottish Government on amendments to strengthen the feasibility of implementation, should the Bill become law, specifically, in relation to the **overall cost of the provisions and commencement.**

Liz Smith MSP has also agreed to developing a work-plan with Government that will set out activities to be undertaken – as led by the Member in Charge – in the lead-up to Stage 2 proceedings, to help further address outstanding concerns, and draft amendments. I have offered to undertake engagement with Liz Smith MSP on a joint basis, and support from Government officials will be made available, as appropriate, to further policy development and analysis that will be necessary to shape a suitable way forward that attempts to best take account of outstanding issues.

I trust that the Committee welcomes my statement today, and shares the view that effective scrutiny at Stage 2 will be important to ensuring the Bill is affordable and deliverable, while also **ensuring equity in provision and access** to residential outdoor education.

Yours sincerely,

Natalie Don-Innes MSP
Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise

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