



Will Wales lead the way? An Open Letter to the First Minister of Wales

Dear Mr Gething,

I'd like you to imagine a classroom without walls, where the sky's the limit and no young person feels left behind. This isn't a daydream; it's what we, at Outward Bound, along with our friends and like-minded organisations across the outdoor education sector, do every single day. But right now, it's a chance not everyone gets. This must change.

Now is the time for Wales to lead the way by letting every young person in on this adventure.

Life's tough for young people these days. They're growing up in a world that often feels overwhelming, especially in the wake of the pandemic. Between the pressure of exams, the constant draw of social media, and the challenge of just figuring out who they are, it's a lot.

More than just an item on the curriculum, outdoor education can be a lifeline for young people, helping them find their way in an increasingly complex world. By making outdoor residential part of the Curriculum for Wales and letting our children out more we can empower them to fulfil their potential in ways that can't be measured by just grades – through teamwork, resilience, courage, and compassion.

The Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill, proposed by Sam Rowlands MS, represents a chance to make this happen and a golden opportunity for every young person in Wales. A cross-party opportunity that can set the standard across the UK and breathe further momentum into Liz Smith MSP and Tim Farron MP's Bills in Holyrood and Westminster. This is a chance to instil countless young people with self-belief and help them grow into adults who can face challenges confidently.

That's why we're stepping up, alongside our friends, to say this matters – and we need your support. To Senedd Members, consider the difference this Bill could make, not just in education, but to both individual wellbeing and the communities we live in. To parents and teachers, imagine the potential this could unlock. Let's not let it slip through our fingers.

Many reading this will recall a feeling of adventure when they spent their first residential away from school, home, and their comfort zone. But the reality is not everyone has this opportunity. Let's ensure every child in Wales gets to experience a classroom without walls. Because when we do, we're not just teaching them to navigate the wilderness; we're helping them navigate life. We urge you to please back the Residential Outdoor Education Bill.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Davidson, Chief Executive – The Outward Bound Trust

Supported by:

Ian Rylatt, Chief Executive – Annington

Mark Castle OBE, Chief Executive – Field Studies Council

Beverley Martin, Chief Commissioner – Girlguiding Cymru

Graham French, Chair – Institute for Outdoor Learning Cymru and AHOEC North Wales

Jo Barnett, Chief Executive – Institute for Outdoor Learning UK

John Watkin, Chief Executive Officer, National Landscapes Association

Asa Gurden, Chair - Outdoor Advisory Board

Anthony Jones, Chief Executive – PGL Beyond

Rachel Cilliers, Centre Director – Rock UK Summit Centre and Chair of South East Wales Regional Tourism Forum.

Kerrie Gemmill, Director – Scouts Cymru

Matt Hyde, Chief Executive – Scouts UK

Christopher Green MBE, Coordinator – Summer Camps Trust

Ndidi Okezie, Chief Executive – UK Youth

James Blake, Chief Executive – YHA (England & Wales)