

BUSINESS CASE

Appendix 4 - Outdoor Learning – planning for the future ideal

Senior Accountable Officer	Kelly McIntosh, Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
Project Lead	Service leader Education and Lifelong Learning (ELL)
PID Status	1
<p>Outdoor learning is an entitlement and we should provide a universal offer</p> <p>The delivery of outdoor learning is directly linked to wider local and global issues and contributes to overall health and wellbeing</p> <p>Outdoor learning must be part of our recovery plan. Equity of provision is essential.</p> <p>Outdoor learning, including adventurous activity, must form part of our planned learning pathways for learners.</p>	<p>Rationale</p> <p>Education Scotland’s Vision 2030+ (2016) details the importance of learning for sustainability with the associated action plan (2019) listing a number of recommendations to be put in place by local authorities between 2020-2025. An integral part of learning for sustainability is a whole community and school approach to outdoor learning.</p> <p>“Learning for sustainability is an approach to life and learning which enables learners, educators, schools and their wider communities to build a socially-just, sustainable and equitable society. An effective whole school and community approach to learning for sustainability weaves together global citizenship, sustainable development education, outdoor learning and children’s rights to create coherent, rewarding and transformative learning experiences.” How Good Is Our School (HGIOS) 4 2015.</p> <p>Learning for sustainability is embedded within the suite of General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS) Professional Standards to support teachers to promote principles and practices of sustainability in all aspects of their work. GTCS 2021</p> <p>Vision 2030+ states that every learner has an entitlement to learning for sustainability and that all school grounds and buildings should support this approach. Having daily contact with nature through thoughtfully developed green spaces, school grounds and other areas relevant to the context of the individual school, e.g. coastal areas, facilitates learning and teaching relating to living within the ecological limits of our planet.</p> <p>A planned ‘learning for sustainability’ approach allows for learning that is meaningful and relevant and so contributes to health and wellbeing and attainment in literacy and numeracy.</p> <p>Education Recovery: Key Actions and Next Steps – The contribution of education in Scotland’s COVID recovery (Scottish Government, October 2021), highlights the importance of outdoor play and learning and the link with this to improved mental and physical wellbeing as we work to help children and young people ‘flourish and recover’. This report points to the need to build a ‘pandemic proof’ system, citing the need for all settings to be equipped with ‘outdoor capabilities’ for learning and reminding us that ‘equity is the defining agenda of our time’.</p> <p>As we work to ensure that our ‘recovery’ phase prioritises health and wellbeing it is also important that we consider this Education Recovery</p>

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Level of service currently made available to our children and young people

report in conjunction with the relevant education Articles of UNCRC, the series of documents related to The Promise and the recommendations of the OECD as we seek to continue to develop and improve our curricular offer; look towards our 'future ideal':

A universal offer of outdoor learning opportunities across all stages of learning, regardless of which setting you attend and a series of more targeted learning opportunities as part of a planned curriculum, delivered by appropriately trained staff and leading to accreditation where appropriate.

Aside from the importance of outdoor learning for the successful delivery of a Curriculum for Excellence in all of our schools a dedicated service could contribute to a whole council resource and be linked closely with learning and engagement related to sustainable development, sustainable lifestyles and global citizenship (as referenced in goal 4.7 of the UN sustainable development action plan designed to end poverty, combat climate change, fight injustice and inequity).

It is important to note that whilst the term 'outdoor learning' is now used to describe a variety of activities undertaken outdoors there is a distinction between a universal offer of learning outdoors and learning which includes 'adventurous activities' (historically referred to as outdoor education). Learning how to be safe whilst undertaking adventurous activity and experiencing carefully managed risk are part of outdoor learning. Experiencing learning through adventurous activity will be an important element of our curricular offer.

Angus Head teachers contributed to the information contained in this 'business case' via a GLOW form. As we progress in our planning all stakeholders will be consulted and involved in the development of a dedicated ELL outdoor learning service.

Current Position

Accessibility

Our school estate is such that our schools have access to environments that support outdoor learning. However, the recent GLOW survey shows that 10 of our settings have outdoor learning areas which are not accessible to all learners, particularly those with additional need. Colleagues in 'property' have visited each of these settings and provided an initial outline of work required and indicative costs. The work will cost in the region of £200K

An appropriately trained workforce

Learning outdoors requires that staff are appropriately trained. Currently some schools are able to fund training. This is not the case for all of our schools. e.g. training in Forest Schools costs £1,300 per person. The Education and Lifelong Learning (ELL) Directorate are exploring alternatives in partnership with NatureScot. In addition, having a

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workforce that is trauma informed is essential, especially when delivering bespoke packages of learning to targeted groups. A training budget of £50K is requested to ensure that each setting has access to suitably qualified practitioners. This funding would also be used to ensure that the temporary lead officer (below) is appropriately trained.

Access to resources (including use of PEF)

Currently several of our schools use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to commission the delivery of elements of outdoor learning. Not all schools receive adequate PEF to do this, making this offer available in only some settings.

Recent Scottish Government funding for activity related to mental health support was provided to secondary schools. Each school requested the delivery of outdoor learning activity. These activities will be delivered by external providers.

In our primary schools, the primary 7 residential experience incorporated learning outdoors and adventurous activity. This experience was an additional cost to families and took place at locations out with Angus.

A dedicated ELL outdoor learning service will help ensure that procurement regulations around the use of PEF are adhered to (an issue previously highlighted through an internal audit report); that when external providers are involved appropriate planning and evaluation of the learning is in place and the quality of delivery is assured; that as the ELL service develops outdoor learning activity will be delivered by specialists within ELL thus creating possible income generation via PEF.

Lead officer to plan and develop the service

In addition to the information about the inaccessibility of some school grounds our initial survey of Head Teachers (HTs) shows that:

Whilst planned outdoor learning is undertaken across all of our settings there is disparity in terms of whether this available at every stage or in every subject area.

Although outdoor learning takes place in school grounds and in green spaces within walking distance of the school, almost all HTs stated they would like specialist input on 'best use of school grounds'.

The majority of HTs would welcome a targeted offer of planned learning with targeted groups and leadership learning.

Just under half of HTs would welcome a local outdoor learning offer that included a residential experience.'

Just under half of HTs would welcome a universal offer for transition from P7-S1.

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Planning and delivering an equitable outdoor learning offer that closely aligns learning in school with learning in our wider communities and ensures that learning in schools is planned to complement our collective efforts to realise the priorities listed in the Strategy on a Page (SOAP) will require a lead officer. This would be a temporary role tasked with continuing consultation with stakeholders, working with our central ELL team on our overall raising attainment strategy and developing and implementing our local authority action plan for Learning for Sustainability (LFS).

A Senior Practitioner LG12 for 12 months at a cost of £58K

Looking to the Future

Every one of our settings will be accessible to all learners.

Following our model of systems leadership, once our school staff have been supported to use their school grounds effectively, appropriate training requirements identified, a consistent method of planning and evaluating learning delivered by external providers the temporary role of senior practitioner will no longer be required.

In year 2022-23 using additional funding for permanent teaching and support staff will enable ELL to create a dedicated outdoor learning service. This service will complement associated work across the council. The line management of this service would sit with one of the ELL Service Leaders.

Purpose

Learning outdoors is linked with increased health and wellbeing and formed a large part of our curricular offer during covid-19 due to restrictions placed on schools. Outdoor learning can lead to increased confidence, self-esteem and a sense of belonging. The return to full re-opening of our schools has revealed an increase in children and young people presenting with behaviours which would benefit from engaging in outdoor learning. Ensuring that all of our learners have access to appropriately planned outdoor learning is an essential part of our recovery curriculum and also part of future proofing our curriculum in the event of future pandemic events.

The aims of this project are:

1 to ensure that outdoor learning spaces within our school grounds are accessible to all;

Outdoor learning as part of the learning for sustainability agenda is an entitlement. All of our learners must be provided equal access to this learning opportunity, without discrimination.

Ensuring that our school grounds are accessible to all learners will help ensure equity of provision and ensure that our curriculum is inclusive.

2 to ensure that every learner experiences planned outdoor learning, both within school grounds and in other suitable areas appropriate to context/location;

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Ensuring accessibility for all will allow teachers to plan learning appropriately. Providing support with how best to utilise green spaces and deliver planned interdisciplinary learning. Learning linked to citizenship, living sustainably, carbon reduction will make our children and young people more aware of local and global issues and directly contribute to the actions contained in the Angus Council SOAP.

3 to ensure that the workforce is appropriately trained and accredited;

Some types of learning outdoors require specific training. The numbers of staff trained in e.g. Forest Schools is low. This training increases the activity that can be offered and so the learning opportunities.

Delivering learning in adventurous activities demands up-to-date accreditation and representation on the Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education (SAPOE). Those already working in the ELL directorate who hold relevant qualifications are not employed specifically to deliver outdoor learning.

In addition to the qualifications and training required to deliver specific activity every member of our workforce should be knowledgeable about a range of additional need including neurodiverse conditions and trauma.

4 to develop a dedicated ELL outdoor learning service which delivers:

(a) universal learning at points of transition (with consideration of a 'residential experience').

At present all of our schools are involved in a programme of transition work from P7-S1. For some schools this includes an element of outdoor learning/adventurous activity. A planned programme of transition activity throughout the year targeted at individual, small group and large group level will ensure an equitable offer and enhance the transition experience.

Leaving school is another important point of transition. For some young people work to increase a 'sense of self' or develop leadership qualities is essential at this time

A residential experience has become a feature for almost every P7. This comes at considerable cost to families, albeit that some schools contribute using PEF.

(b) personal development qualifications (SCQF accredited) for targeted groups of young people, including those in our 16+ group;

As schools continue to design a curriculum that meets the need of every learner the requirement for specialist provision out with the 'mainstream' curriculum is increasing. It is essential that this learning is part of a planned learning pathway and is subject to the same rigour for tracking, monitoring and reporting as all other areas of the curriculum. Outdoor learning, including adventurous activity, may be part of this planned learning.

Planned learning which leads to accreditation will raise attainment.

(c) curricular inserts for targeted groups of young people, including those with additional need;

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Similar to (b) but in this case smaller units of work designed to e.g. facilitate young people to re-engage with learning, build positive relationships, build self-esteem and resilience.

Targeted support of this kind in small groups supports children and young people to be able to access other areas of the curriculum with more confidence, build better relationships with each other and staff. Attendance and engagement with learning will increase.

(d) leadership learning opportunities;

Planned 'leadership learning' involves applying learning in new and unfamiliar contexts, teaches our young people how to build teams, increases their confidence and resilience, highlights the importance of relationships and improves the ability to communicate effectively. Leadership learning is relevant throughout schooling.

(e) learning and activity opportunities as part of an ongoing youth work offer/ programme of holiday activity.

A dedicated outdoor learning service in ELL could be utilised to work exclusively with those young people targeted by the 16+ team, other young adults requiring the opportunity to access learning which enables personal development and to enhance the programme of activities offered to families during school holidays. This could include for example, our care experienced young people. Should these programmes continue to be subject to grant funding then additional sources of income may be secured.

The ELL outdoor learning service will plan, deliver, assess and evaluate learning, including that required for accredited qualifications.

**Strategic Objectives
(including SOAP)**

Maximise inclusion and reduce inequity

Ensure that our outdoor learning spaces are accessible to all and that there are planned programmes of learning in all of our schools;
Offer bespoke learning opportunities for targeted groups with a focus on personal development, self-esteem, better engagement with school;
A universal offer of adventurous activity at transition from P7-S1;
A targeted offer of adventurous activity linked to leadership skills.

Close the poverty related attainment gap and raise attainment

Outdoor learning helps children and young people demonstrate learning in a meaningful context and out with the context of the subject area in which skills are traditionally taught. Learning outdoors can build resilience, self-esteem, confidence and raise attainment in literacy and numeracy.

Work with partners to provide a local residential experience that is part of a planned curriculum and so does not add to the cost of the school day

Reducing our carbon footprint

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	<p>Outdoor learning as part of the wider learning for sustainability agenda can help develop learners who are committed to the principles of global citizenship, democratic participation and living within the ecological limits of our planet.</p>
Project Scope	<p>A dedicated outdoor learning service for all of our schools which will offer advice and guidance on best use of school grounds and surrounding areas; a universal offer for every school and bespoke packages for identified groups of children and young people, e.g. leadership, transition, as part of a planned learning pathway; accredited training to school staff where appropriate; the opportunity for children and young people to engage in controlled risk-taking and adventurous activity.</p>
Project Deliverables	<p>An outdoor learning service that is part of the ELL Directorate. A focus on providing advice and guidance on a universal offer 2-18. The outdoor learning service would work with schools to develop planned learning as part of a universal offer for 2-18. In addition, the service would offer targeted/bespoke learning packages for identified groups of children and young people, leading to appropriate accreditation where possible.</p> <p>The impact on outcomes will be measureable, particularly with regards the smaller identified groups of children and young people. In particular increased attendance, decreased exclusion, and raised attainment.</p> <p>A dedicated service will help ensure that all inputs arranged via our schools are consistent with procurement guidelines and demonstrate Best Value. Where input is still required from an external provider, the outdoor learning service will use a framework approach to provide details and assurance of the companies, ensure service level agreements are in place and up-to-date etc, ensure that all risk planning and use of Evolve is in place</p>
Constraints	<p>The use of PEF to fund targeted activity is at the discretion of Head Teachers. The proposed future model of a dedicated specialist service could generate income from schools for targeted work.</p> <p>Angus Council currently has a suitable building and a store of equipment for adventurous activity at Monikie Country park. It is not known whether this requires to be upgraded or renewed. If the dedicated ELL were not permitted access to this resource investment in equipment, including a mini-bus, would be required. This would be funded from already existing budgets.</p> <p>If a local residential experience were to be included, this would require investment (although this is already listed in an Angus Alive future plan).</p>
Options Appraisal	<p><i>*Alternate options considered at this stage must meet the stated business needs; consider innovative approaches and all delivery possibilities. Options for sourcing delivery, obtaining best value and for technical implementation must also be considered). Audit Scotland has guidance on options appraisal, which can be accessed via this link:</i></p>

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	https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/local/2014/nr_140320_hcw_options_appraisal.pdf
Organisational Requirements	<p>A temporary Senior Practitioner to conduct a fuller consultation and develop a full business/project plan.</p> <p>A dedicated ELL outdoor learning service</p>
Costs	<p>Cost of making all school grounds accessible - £200K</p> <p>Cost of training requirements - £50K</p> <p>Cost of temp LG12 senior practitioner for 12 months – circa £58K</p> <p>Total cost £308k</p>
Project Plan	<p>Immediately – begin the work to make sure that all outdoor learning areas in all settings are accessible to all learners</p> <p>Jan 2021-Jan 2022 – Temporary senior practitioner in post</p> <p>April 2022- Scottish Government permanent funding for additional school staff in place</p>
Stakeholders	<p>Following the submission of the initial project outline to the Corporate Leadership Team, a GLOW form was created and sent to all Head Teachers. The form and the responses may be accessed using this link</p> <p>https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPage.aspx#Analysis=true&FormId=oyzTzM4Wj0KVQTctawUZKbWXAusUtiNIoOZx7NL606FURVBKUjY1VEZCNIJRN1dUTENJMEtNNIZIQS4u&Token=c3cd8362f2b34a40997374d2dd5f7ab8</p> <p>At present many of our schools procure outdoor learning type activity externally. Consultation on what our schools are currently delivering and what they would like to be available as part of their planned curriculum is required. This would include learning in the senior phase that is accredited within the SCQF framework.</p> <p>Children, young people and parents must be part of this consultation</p> <p>Colleagues in the Vibrant Communities Directorate and Angus Alive must be part of this consultation</p> <p>Community groups who are keen to work with our children and young people on outdoor learning must be consulted</p> <p>Dundee and Angus College – provide an increasing offer for our senior phase and will be consulted with regards learning opportunities in outdoor activities which lead to accreditation.</p> <p>Consultation with colleagues in Dundee City and Perth and Kinross regarding the development of our own training for practitioners, leadership academy and residential experience.</p>