

Enabling Pathways

Consultation response form

Your name: Sue Williams

Organisation: Natural Resources Wales

e-mail/telephone number:

sue.williams@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk

0300 065 5075

Your address:

Natural Resources Wales

Clawddnewydd,

Ruthin

Denbighshire

LL15 2NL

Responses should be returned by **16 July 2021** to

Curriculum Realisation Unit
Curriculum and Assessment Division
The Education Directorate
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

or completed electronically and sent to:

e-mail: curriculumforwales@gov.wales



**Cyfoeth
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Natural
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Wales**

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) is the largest public sector organisation in Wales. Its purpose is to ensure that the natural resources of Wales are sustainably maintained, enhanced, and used, now and in the future. This means looking after air, land, water, wildlife, plants and soil to improve Wales' well-being, and provide a better future for everyone.

The [Environment \(Wales\) Act](#) and the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act](#) together provide modern legislation for managing Wales' natural resources and improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales (it's sustainable development). In light of the recent climate change and environment emergency declaration by Welsh Government and other public bodies, an understanding and appreciation of the need for the [sustainable management of our natural resources](#) (SMNR) is essential now and in the future, as our environment comes under increasing pressure from a growing population. This will directly impact and be impacted by climate change and will drive the need for increased energy production adding pressure to our use of natural resources, their resilience and biodiversity. In line with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act this will require work across the environment and education sectors to ensure an understanding and positive connection with the role that natural resources and the environment play in our lives socially, economically and culturally, is established from a young age and built on throughout our learning journeys.

Natural Resources Wales is pleased to work with the Curriculum Realisation Unit and support the on-going implementation of the Curriculum for Wales. NRW can provide advice and guidance to highlight the multiple health benefits of learning in learning about and learning for the natural environment - increased physical activity, improved mental health & well-being and attainment, access to subject specialists, national and local support networks, outdoor learning advice and guidance, resources, data and training for teachers and education professionals.

For further clarification or information please contact:
education@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk
www.naturalresources.wales/learning

Question 1 – Do you work in or support the delivery of education?

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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i) If yes, what is your organisation? (If no continue to iii below)

Welsh-medium school (primary)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Higher education institution	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welsh-medium school (secondary)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Diocesan authority	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welsh-medium school (special)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Regional consortia	<input type="checkbox"/>
English-medium school (primary)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local authority	<input type="checkbox"/>
English-medium school (secondary)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Private training provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
English-medium school (special)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Third sector	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bilingual school (primary)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Government	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bilingual school (secondary)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adult community learning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welsh-medium middle school	<input type="checkbox"/>	Awarding organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>
English-medium middle school	<input type="checkbox"/>	Teaching union	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pupil referral unit (PRU)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Regulatory body (includes Inspectorate)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Special school	<input type="checkbox"/>	Governing body	<input type="checkbox"/>
Funded non-maintained setting	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify): Public Sector Body	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Further education college	<input type="checkbox"/>		

ii) What is your primary role?

Headteacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chancellor/vice-chancellor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lecturer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practitioner	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pioneer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newly qualified teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Governor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching assistant	<input type="checkbox"/>	Challenge advisor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senior leader	<input type="checkbox"/>	School improvement officer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supply teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inspector	<input type="checkbox"/>
Principal/vice-principal	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify): Principal Advisor to Welsh Government on the sustainable management of natural resources	✓
Early Years advisory teacher (or equivalent)	<input type="checkbox"/>		

iii) If you do not work in or support the delivery of education, in what capacity would you like to provide feedback?

Parent or carer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Employer	✓
Adult 18-plus (not a parent or carer)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Apprentice	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child or young person (under 18)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify): Advisor	✓
Student/academic	<input type="checkbox"/>		

iv) Are you providing feedback on behalf of an organisation or group?

Yes	✓	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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If 'yes' please specify.

Natural Resources Wales

Question 2 – Is there a clear relationship between this draft guidance and the published Curriculum for Wales guidance?

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Please explain your answer.

This guidance clearly provides learners with appropriate developmental support development towards realising the four purposes of the curriculum.

Question 3 – Does this draft guidance sufficiently address the issues facing practitioners working with learners in the period of learning leading to progression step 1 when planning, designing and delivering the curriculum and assessment for learners?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Please explain your answer.

Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales have declared a climate change and nature emergency. The current state of the natural environment will have impacts on children's health, well-being and hopes for their future. The climate and nature emergencies are the most significant threat to life on Earth. Enabling educators and learners to embed normalised pro-environmental behaviours must be a principal driver for all Curriculum for Wales guidance. While NRW welcomes the parity given to use of the outdoors alongside indoors and opportunities for holistic child development and learning, there is insufficient guidance on the multiple benefits of learning in, about and for the natural environment. In this draft guidance, outdoors could simply be referring to a tarmac yard which would not deliver the desirable outcomes described. NRW recommends explicit reference to the natural environment, green and blue spaces, local nature areas including woods, parks, reserves, edges and wild spaces, etc, as suitable natural outdoor areas to play and learn in.

If our learners are to enjoy positive well-being while meeting the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales, experiences must include significant amounts of learning in, learning about and learning for the natural environment to ensure an early connection with nature and an understanding of local action and global consequence. Research shows that there are important positive correlations between human health, well-being, intelligence and nature. Various studies have shown children are healthier, happier, smarter and more creative when they have a connection to nature. This connection has positive effects on issues which can affect well-being including:

- children with attention deficit disorder
- children with asthma

- helping to prevent Vitamin D deficiency
- guarding against obesity and type 2 diabetes
- minimising childhood short sightedness
- promoting academic attainment
- reducing the symptoms of stress
- developing employability skills
- opportunities to increase physical activity
- opportunities to lay down a blueprint of pro environmental behaviour

Currently most schools and settings do not have sufficient, suitably skilled and knowledgeable staff to enable a whole school approach to embedding normalised pro-environmental behaviours and protecting and enhancing the school or setting grounds or utilised natural outdoor spaces. NRW would like to see every setting with at least one appropriately trained and qualified member of staff who fully understands the sustainable management of natural resources and can facilitate environmental learning via outdoor learning pedagogy, implementing a range of interventions in order to gain the multiple benefits to health, wellbeing and attainment for learners that the natural environment can realise. This is a cost-effective method of ensuring both pupil development and local environmental gains to support mitigation of the climate and nature emergencies, building understanding and a recognition of responsibility.

It should also be noted that the content and experiences within Initial Teacher Education, childcare and youth work courses are going to be critical if this guidance is to serve our learners well and strategically targeted quality training is required. Natural Resources Wales along with our partners in the Outdoor Learning Training Network Wales would be happy to lead or support this work.

This is backed up by recently published research - [Research Study 6](#) part of [Research studies on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Welsh education system](#) which recommends “greater support for outdoor learning”.

Question 4 – Does this guidance adequately support and help in planning, designing and implementing curriculum and assessment for learners in the period of learning leading to progression step 1?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Please explain your answer.

See response to question 3

Question 5 – Which aspects, if any, of this guidance do you feel are most helpful and should be retained?

NRW believes that this draft guidance is well formed and strives to empower practitioners to provide holistic support to the learner. However, while we welcome the needed inclusion of the outdoors and the natural world, we recommend that it is strengthened to enhance children's rights to grow up, play and learn in a healthy environment.

The realisation of the Curriculum for Wales as a whole would be strengthened by bespoke guidance around learning in, learning about and learning for the natural environment and the multiple benefits this brings to staff and learners.

Question 6 – Are there any aspects of this guidance that you feel are too prescriptive?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Please specify.

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Question 7 – Are there any aspects of this guidance that you feel are not detailed enough?

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Please explain your answer.

See response to question 3

Question 8 – Would it be helpful for more detailed information on the development of cross-curricular skills for learners in this period of learning to be included in this guidance?

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Please explain your answer.

In particularly within the natural environment drawing out the unique opportunities these learning spaces can provide.

Question 9 – Is there any other information you think should be included in this guidance?

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Please explain your answer.

Outdoor learning should be portrayed as a fundamental pedagogy, a way of teaching and learning, a unique space in which to promote learner well-being through connection to nature and the social aspects of playing and learning outdoors.

Experiences such as residential stays, adventure education, recognised accredited methods like forest school and coastal school, field work, environmental education and the use of school grounds, local parks, woodlands and beaches - all the places which can “provide rich experiences” for learners - are fundamental to developing emotional literacy, resilience and a sense of self.

Evidence from around the world demonstrates the benefits to well-being of a connection with and learning in the natural environment.

Please see the [NRW website](#) for more information relating to physical activity, mental well-being and attainment.

On Page 6 “Being Outdoors” section, it states in the *“Learning outdoors can lead to high levels of well-being, confidence, and engagement. In an outdoor environment, learners can explore, practice and enhance their skills. **To maximise the potential of being outdoors, learners need enabling adults who understand the importance and value of it.**”* This is a vital sentence and it is important that we recognise the deficit in skills and experience around this statement. It should also be noted that the content and experiences within Initial Teacher Education, childcare and youth work courses are going to be critical if this guidance is to serve our learners well and strategically targeted quality training is required. Natural Resources Wales along with our partners in the Outdoor Learning Training Network Wales would be happy to lead or support this work and explain the range of Agored Cymru qualifications already available which support CPD in child development, learning and play in the natural environment and the understanding and implementation of the sustainable management of natural resources.

NRW would like to see every setting with at least one appropriately trained and qualified member of staff who fully understands the sustainable management of natural resources and can facilitate environmental learning via outdoor learning pedagogy, implementing interventions in order to gain the multiple benefits to health, wellbeing and attainment for learners that the natural environment can realise. This is a cost-effective method of ensuring both pupil development and local environmental gains to support mitigation of the climate and nature emergencies, building understanding and an early recognition of responsibility.

This is backed up by recently published research - [Research Study 6](#) part of [Research studies on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Welsh education system](#) recommends “greater support for outdoor learning”.

In Operational Guidance to Schools, Welsh Government has advocated the use of the [High Quality in Outdoor Learning in Wales](#) document to underpin pupil learning. This should continue to be a valuable resource to support all guidance relating to the outdoors and natural environment.

NRW would be happy to support the development of further resources as required and can facilitate co-production of any such resource or training capacity via its facilitation of the Wales Council for Outdoor Learning and Outdoor Learning Training Network Wales.

Question 10 – We would like to know your views on the effects that the Enabling Pathways guidance would have on the Welsh language, specifically on:

- i) opportunities for people to use Welsh
- ii) treating the Welsh language, no less favourably than the English language.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Supporting comments

Natural Resources Wales is subject to Welsh Language Standards under Section 47 of the Measure and is happy that the Curriculum for Wales offers equal opportunity for both languages treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Question 11 – Please also explain how you believe the Enabling Pathways guidance could be formulated or changed so as to have:

- i) positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language
- ii) no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Supporting comments

As all Curriculum for Wales guidance and documents are available in both languages it is difficult to see how this guidance could be formulated or changed so as to have positive effects, increased positive effects or no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Question 12– We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

See question 9 and also to note NRW's [Natural Progression Steps](#) which explain the importance of an early connection to nature.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here:

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