Curriculum for Wales Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) guidance

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

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 – How well does the guidance explain the scope of RVE and its context within the Humanities Area ?

Not well at all	☐	**Not well**	☐	**Acceptable**	☐	**Well**	✓	**Very well**	☐

Please explain your answer (no more than 250 words).

As principal advisor to Welsh Government on the natural environment and its sustainable management, we are very pleased to see that the draft guidance provides strong direction to consider the spirituality, ethics and relationships between humans and the natural environment as echoed within the Humanities area as well as Science and Technology. We would recommend that understanding this connection to nature in terms of spirituality, ethics and relationship/cynefin, is weaved through guidance for **all** AoLEs. NRW would be pleased to support further guidance around this.

We agree that this guidance will further enable teaching and learning in this area, and to help facilitate wider understanding of how the natural world underpins many ancient and modern religions as well as our reliance and impacts on the natural world.

Although there is reference to “sustainability” and “care, concern and respect”, in terms of the declared climate and nature emergencies we would like to see use of the term “sustainable management of our natural resources” to ensure an understanding of the need to use and manage natural resources now and in the future and that everyone has a role to play.

Question 2 – Is the guidance, as a whole, clear and helpful for you in your role?

Very unclear	☐	**Slightly unclear**	☐	**Neither clear nor unclear**	☐	**Slightly clear**	✓	**Very clear**	☐

Please explain your answer.

As well as teachers, the guidance is clear for providers and those who are in the position to support schools and settings in the realisation and delivery of the Curriculum for Wales. The Learning Journeys offer a variety of examples and help highlight the interconnections across the AoLE’s.

Question 3 – Does the guidance offer relevant information to support practitioners when designing their school curriculum for RVE?

Not relevant at all	☐	**Slightly relevant**	☐	**Moderately relevant**	☐	**Relevant**	✓	**Very relevant**	☐

Please explain your answer.

The guidance does offer relevant information to support practitioners when designing their school curriculum as stated above helps to highlight the interconnections across the AoLE's.

However, there is a missed opportunity to further strengthen the link to becoming ethical and informed citizens by not referring to the current state of nature in terms of the declared climate and nature emergencies and everyone's role and responsibility around this issue. Although there is reference to "sustainability" and "care, concern and respect", we would like to see use of the term "sustainable management of our natural resources" to ensure an understanding of the need to use and manage natural resources now and in the future and that everyone has a role to play.

Question 4 – Thinking about each section of the guidance, do you feel there are:

- any gaps in information? If so, what should be added?
- any sections that are particularly helpful? If so, in what way are they helpful and to whom?

Much of the draft CfW guidance currently in consultation, contains sections referring to Outdoor Learning Pedagogy. NRW recommends that such a section is included in this guidance to support RVE curriculum design and teaching and further enhance the section on **Connections to the wider or natural world**. NRW would welcome the opportunity to support this and help make the important links between outdoor learning and a real connection with nature and the multiple benefits that brings.
For the majority of school staff and senior leadership at a time of great change and with the embedding of the new curriculum, there is already an existing deficit in confidence and competence. They may/will have limited experience or exposure during initial teacher training to outdoor learning pedagogies that promote spirituality, ethics and relationships alongside multiple benefits to physical health, mental well-being and attainment. NRW would like to see every school in Wales, facilitated by its own Outdoor Curriculum Co-ordinator role, encompassing the development, use and maintenance cycle of outdoor learning spaces for health, well-being and attainment. 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.
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".

Within the Checklist for schools and settings section – NRW recommends questioning explicitly on opportunities to have first-hand experience of the natural world and help to ensure parity with indoor learning opportunities. E.g.
"Have you included opportunities to directly experience and reflect on the natural environment/natural world in your curriculum design? "

Question 5 – Does the guidance offer all practitioners sufficient support for their planning and teaching of RVE?

Insufficient	☐	Somewhat insufficient	☐	Neither insufficient nor sufficient	☐	Somewhat sufficient	✓	Sufficient	☐

Please explain your answer.

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For the majority of school staff and senior leadership at a time of great change and with the embedding of the new curriculum, there is already an existing deficit in confidence and competence. They may/will have limited experience or exposure during initial teacher training to outdoor learning pedagogies that promote spirituality, ethics and relationships alongside multiple benefits to physical health, mental well-being and attainment. NRW would like to see every school in Wales, facilitated by its own Outdoor Curriculum Co-ordinator role, encompassing the development, use and maintenance cycle of outdoor learning spaces for health, well-being and attainment. 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.

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Question 6 – Is additional support (e.g. professional learning and resources) needed to ensure the successful implementation of this guidance?

If so, please provide more detail.

Yes	✓	No	☐	Not sure	☐

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 and present moral and ethical dilemmas.

With the natural world currently under levels of stress unparalleled in human history, children are witnessing environmental degradation and destruction in real time, hearing about global threats like species loss and developing fears and worries about environmental risks and the future.

As principal advisor to Welsh Government on the natural environment and its sustainable management, we warmly welcome the inclusion of the natural world within this draft guidance. However, we would recommend further strengthening to include understanding of the declared climate and nature emergencies to further develop understanding of the vital interdependency between human life and the need to embed pro-environmental behaviours from a young age.

We would like to see a whole school approach to normalising pro environmental behaviours and taking positive action through embedding sustainable school practice at an early an age as possible. A whole school approach needs to encompass the vital role that the natural environment has in sustaining human health and well-being, through fostering a strong connection to nature to enable a better future for Wales and the world.

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, the three aspects of learning in, learning about and learning for the natural environment, who 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 a recognition of responsibility.

NRW's Natural Progression Steps model is a valuable resource to support this topic.

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 would continue to be a valuable resource to support this topic.

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

Question 7 – This question is aimed at local authorities and Standing Advisory Councils for religious education (SACs).

Is the guidance a helpful document for developing agreed syllabus conferences?

Not helpful at all	☐	**Slightly helpful**	☐	**Somewhat helpful**	☐	**Very helpful**	☐	**Extremely helpful**	☐

Is the guidance a helpful document for SACs?

Not helpful at all	☐	**Slightly helpful**	☐	**Somewhat helpful**	☐	**Very helpful**	☐	**Extremely helpful**	☐

Please explain your answer.

Not applicable.

Question 8 – We would like to know your views on the effects that the RVE 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 9 – Please also explain how you believe the RVE 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 the RVE 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 10 – 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.

No further comment.

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: ☐