

Children and Families Residential Outdoor Centres – Progress Update

Education, Children and Families Committee

8 March 2012

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 The Education, Children and Families Committee at its meeting on the 21 June 2011 called for a progress report on encouraging Head Teachers to use the Council's Centres for outdoor learning and how children from disadvantaged backgrounds could be assisted to participate in Centre activities.

2 Summary

- 2.1 The following report contains details of progress in encouraging greater use by schools of our two Residential Outdoor Centres and our intention to increase the number of children and young people from disadvantaged areas gaining experience of a residential educational trip. The Council has allocated £100,000 of additional funding to support disadvantaged children and young people to access sporting and outdoor learning opportunities.

3 Main report

- 3.1 There has been encouraging progress on the use of the Outdoor Centres by City of Edinburgh Schools. In the calendar year 2010, a total of thirty four schools went to Benmore and Lagganlia. In 2011 this increased to sixty schools. Furthermore, the advance bookings for 2012 for both Centres are extremely encouraging with 64 Edinburgh schools already booked for the new calendar year (see Appendix 1 for full list of Edinburgh Schools using Benmore and Lagganlia). We acknowledge that greater use of the Centres by Secondary Schools could take place. There are a number of factors that contribute to this picture. These include exam pressures with senior pupils, changing exam requirements in relation to field studies, the release of Primary teachers is easier than subject based Secondary teachers and the fact that both Centres lack the capacity to deal with large whole year groups. Secondary Schools often use residential education as part of transition programmes and want specific weeks in June or September. These weeks at both Benmore and Lagganlia are regarded as peak weeks and therefore some schools have to seek other alternatives. Also over the past ten years the expectations and aspirations of pupils and teachers has changed. A significant number of

secondary schools prefer to organise foreign trips. Furthermore, in the case of both Benmore and the main house at Lagganlia the dormitory style design of the bedrooms are probably more attractive for younger pupils. Plans are under consideration to build self catering cottages next to the main house at Benmore and to make further improvements to both Centres that increase the total capacity. However, it should be noted that a range of other schools and community groups also use the Centres. These include school groups from East, Mid and West Lothian, the Orkney Islands and all over Scotland as well as International schools from the likes of Denmark, South Africa, Germany and Kuwait (a further 80 groups including ten Secondary School age groups). The Centres also accommodate self catering groups on the weekends and during school holidays. We are beginning to see an emerging trend for self catering weekend excursions by schools and this is something that we wish to encourage.

- 3.2 The Excursions Policy has been updated and this will be sent out to all schools with a covering letter fully endorsing the advantages of schools/centres using either Benmore or Lagganlia. This will focus on the quality and also the further benefits of providing added flexibility in terms of teacher/pupil ratios. The Health and Safety Executive recently chose to highlight two good practice case studies from Edinburgh schools (at Firrhill High School and Kaimes School) to illustrate on how best to manage risk while enhancing the curricular experiences of pupils working outdoors on in these cases an Advanced Geography Higher and a cross-curricular environmental project.
- 3.3 The Centres have run special CPD weekends to brief teachers on the role and growing importance of Outdoor Learning within Curriculum for Excellence. In 2011 ten weekend courses took place with 136 staff attending these sessions. Children and young people can also undertake the JASS (Junior Award Scheme Scotland) 'My Adventure' activities during their Residential stay at the Centres and this has proven to be a very attractive option for schools.
- 3.4 In terms of addressing the issue of disadvantaged pupils using the Centres, the Sports and Outdoor Education Unit has undertaken an extensive consultation with Residential Units. Nine Centres were visited and staff meetings held to examine widening and improving access to sport and outdoor learning opportunities. One of the key recommendations to emerge is that greater use by looked after and accommodated children of Benmore and Lagganlia Centres should be encouraged and promoted. A residential weekend will be organised at Lagganlia for residential child care staff to showcase the Centre and to explore how the outdoor centres develop a closer working relationship with them. Moreover, the Residential Outdoor Centres should investigate how they can build closer links with family support and develop opportunities for identified families to spend time together on structured activities which promote bonding and positive interaction between parents and children.
- 3.5 Reducing the cost of Residential stays is not an easy task. There are fixed costs in terms of transport, accommodation, food and laundry as well as for staffing to organise and lead a variety of adventure/outdoor activities for the full duration of the week. The Centres have been innovative in offering first time discounts, short stay and week-end options and reduced prices for any off peak periods such as late November. A further innovation has been the introduction of Camping Huts at Lagganlia. These are now in place and will provide an

important low cost option for smaller groups (max 24) during the peak spring/summer months.

- 3.6 A further recent development that offers the possibility of increased work with pupils from areas of disadvantage is the introduction of the Modern Apprenticeship posts. One for Outdoor Learning is in place and two further posts will be introduced for the start of the next Academic year (August 2012). These Apprentices will work across all three of our Outdoor Centres – Benmore, Lagganlia and at Bangholm in Edinburgh - on a rotational basis. The intention is that the Apprentices will adopt a Primary School in an area of disadvantage and be involved in pre and post Residential stays so that the children's experience is not just limited to a single week. We intend this to provide an additional and important link between the Residential Centres and Edinburgh.
- 3.7 Another new and potentially significant development is the creation of the 'Friends of Lagganlia'. This is an organisation with charitable status that has been set up to promote and support the Centre and in particular to raise additional funds to support work with disadvantaged children and their families. The launch of this organisation will take place in the European Room on Thursday 8 March 2012 at 2pm.
- 3.8 The creation of a new fund of 100k to support disadvantaged children and young people to access new sporting and outdoor learning opportunities holds out a very exciting opportunity to allow pupils from schools in the most disadvantaged areas of the city experience the benefits of a Residential week at either Benmore or Lagganlia. We are in the process of establishing criteria for the support of disadvantaged pupils and families.
- 3.9 In addition to this new funding stream the Department has recently taken steps to create the Edinburgh Education Trust, as a registered Scottish Charity. The focus of activity is the promotion of corporate parenting with regard to looked after children by encouraging access to sporting, expressive arts and outdoor learning opportunities.
- 3.10 The introduction of Activity Agreements offers a further opportunity for the outdoor learning centres to engage with young people who are, or are at risk of becoming, not in employment, education or training. Outdoor learning provides proven and highly effective methods of developing team building, problem solving, decision making and communication skills, all valued by employers. In so doing, it also enhances resilience, confidence and self esteem. Discussions are underway with the Activity Agreements Coordinator to take this work forward.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 A new fund of £100,000 has been established to support disadvantaged children and young people to access sporting and outdoor learning opportunities.

5 Equalities Impact

- 5.1 There are no negative impacts on equality. The initiatives detailed in this Report set out to improve equalities for all service users.

6 Environmental Impact

- 6.1 There are no negative impacts on the environment as a result of this report. The development of sustainable education is one of the topics which features strongly during Residential programmes at our Outdoor Centres.

7 Recommendations

Committee are asked to:

- 7.1 Note the progress to date.

Gillian Tee
Director of Children and Families

Appendices	1) List of Edinburgh Schools using Benmore and Lagganlia
Contact/tel/Email	Robin Yellowlees, Service Manager – Children & Families Sports and Outdoor Education Unit – robin.yellowlees@edinburgh.gov.uk tel; 0131 469 3953
Wards affected	All
Single Outcome Agreement	Supports National Outcome 6 – ‘we live longer, healthier lives’ and National Outcome 4 – ‘our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.
Background Papers	Children and Families Residential Outdoor Centres – Property Progress Report Education, Children and Families Committee 21 June 2011

**List of Schools going to Benmore and Lagganlia Centres in 2012
(Advanced Bookings):**

BENMORE CENTRE

Primary Schools:

Bonaly Primary School
 Castleview Primary School
 Corstorphine Primary School
 Craiglockhart Primary School
 Duddingston Primary School
 Echline Primary School
 Gilmerton Primary School
 Granton Primary School
 Gylemuir Primary School
 Hillwood Primary School
 Kirkliston Primary School
 Leith Primary School
 Liberton Primary School
 Longstone Primary School
 Murrayburn Primary School
 Parsons Green Primary School
 Prestonfield Primary School
 Queensferry Primary School
 Roseburn Primary School
 Sciennes Primary School
 St Catherine's Primary School
 St Francis Primary School
 St John's Primary School
 St Mark's Primary School
 St Mary's Primary School
 St Peter's Primary School
 Stockbridge Primary School
 Tollcross Primary School
 Towerbank Primary School
 Trinity Primary School
 Wardie Primary School

Secondary Schools:

Boroughmuir High School
 Craigmount High School
 Leith Academy

Special Schools:

Prospect Bank School

Independent Schools:

George Heriot's (S1 year group)
 George Watson's

LAGGANLIA CENTRE

Primary Schools:

Balgreen Primary School
 Blackhall Primary School
 Broughton Primary School
 Brunstane Primary School
 Bruntsfield Primary School
 Buckstone Primary School
 Clermiston Primary School
 Clermiston Primary School
 Colinton Primary School
 Corstorphine Primary School
 Gracemount Primary School
 Leith Walk Primary School
 Pentland Primary School
 Preston Street Primary School
 Sciennes Primary School
 South Morningside Primary School
 St Cuthbert's Primary School
 St Mary's (Leith) Primary School
 St Mary's (Leith) Primary School
 St Ninian's Primary School
 St Peter's Primary School
 Stenhouse Primary School
 The Royal High Primary School

Secondary Schools:

Craigmount High School (2)
 Craigroyston High School

Independent Schools:

St George's School for Girls
 The Mary Erskines (2)