

# Report on the Consultation of: The Review of Residential and Outdoor Education



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A review of the Residential (Catered and Self-Catered) and Outdoor Education Centres (OEC's) in the statutory and voluntary sectors, which are funded or part-funded by the Department of Education, commenced in September 2015 and was completed in January 2016.

A number of recommendations were identified and these were consulted upon from the 8 November 2016 until 6 February 2017. These recommendations included:

- the need for a rationalisation of existing statutory provision based on economic viability and proximity to other OEC's
- the requirement for the development of a clear strategy and policy
- the establishment of more effective links to the School and Youth Service Curriculum
- the assessed needs of young people
- to meaningful and ongoing evaluation of outcomes.

In addition, it was recommended that:

- consideration be given to enhancing collaborative working across the statutory and voluntary sectors
- renaming the statutory OEC's as 'Outdoor Learning OEC's'
- revising the groups targeted for both weekend and day usage.

The consultation was hosted on the Education Authority (EA) website and Survey Monkey was used to facilitate the public to respond and comment on these recommendations. Hard copies of the questionnaire were also provided and organisations and interested parties were able to respond through letter, campaign, petition and report.

The questionnaire, online and in hard copy, generated 1850 responses, with a further 45 submissions, 295 campaign responses and 5 petitions.

The purpose of the consultation was to ascertain public opinion on the recommendations and determine whether there were significant themes, or alternative models, which could assist in establishing a way forward for Residential and Outdoor Education in Northern Ireland. The consultation responses were collated and it was established that there were few significant common themes emerging and little significant negative opinion or alternative models provided to the recommendations.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The publication of the Youth Service policy document ‘Priorities for Youth Policy (2013) by the Department of Education, proposed that *“EA will carry out a baseline audit of currently funded/supported provision to identify gaps and potential for over provision and to inform the development of the needs assessment. **This will include a review of the statutory youth estate and outdoor education centres**”*. (Reference 4.201)
- 1.2 As a result of this proposed action, the EA tasked the Central Management Support Unit (CMSU) and the Corporate Development Officers (CDO) to carry out a review of the residential and outdoor education centres (catered and self catered).
- 1.3 The review of Residential and Outdoor Education commenced on 1 July 2015 and was completed on 31 January 2016. The review encompassed the views of a wide range of providers, users and other interested bodies when compiling the report and based on both these responses and the factual information collated, recommendations were agreed for consultation.
- 1.4 The EA considered these recommendations necessary if Residential and Outdoor Education was to transform its delivery, financial capability, added value and contribution to education and youth provision within Northern Ireland.
- 1.5 These recommendations were put forward for public consultation from the 8 November 2016 to the 6 February 2017. The public consultation generated a number of responses and these have been collated and the findings are provided in this report.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Consultation strategy

- 2.1.1 The EA reiterated its commitment to consulting and engaging with local people in the planning and delivery of all services. The strategy which the Authority adapted for this consultation attempted to ensure that all those with a vested interest in Residential and Outdoor Education, particularly young people and interested members of the public had an opportunity to comment on the findings of the review.
- 2.1.2 A key action within the Priorities for Youth Policy requested the EA to carry out a baseline audit to identify gaps and over provision within the Youth Service to inform the development of a needs assessment. This included a review of the statutory OECs and voluntary centres also funded through the Department of Education.

2.1.3 The Review of Residential and Outdoor Education was commissioned in February 2015 and its terms of reference were agreed between the former Association of Chief Executives, Heads of Service and teaching and non-teaching Trade Unions.

2.1.4 The findings of the review were completed in July 2016 and then published on the EA website for consultation with the general public for a period of 12 weeks.

## 2.2 Pre consultation publicity

2.2.1 A Press Release was issued by EA to coincide with the launch of the Review and was available on the EA website from the initial date the consultation process began.

2.2.2 The EA, in the process of drafting the Review of Residential and Outdoor Education, had extensive engagement and consultation with key stakeholders and young people. These groups and individuals were informed that the Review documents were being produced and were invited to participate in the consultation process.

## 2.3 Online consultation

2.3.1 The Review of Residential and Outdoor Education was posted on the EA website on 8 November 2016. It was accompanied by an Implementation Plan, the Rationalisation Plan and a Consultation Questionnaire. The 12 week consultation period which closed on 6 February 2016. The questionnaire was constructed using the 'Survey Monkey' software and made available online.

## 2.4 Hard copy consultation

2.4.1 Consultation with key stakeholders and young people was facilitated by a series of meetings across the EA Region, with the same information being provided using a PowerPoint presentation and script. A presentation especially designed for young people was also devised and this was made available to youth workers as required. A hard copy questionnaire was also available to accompany the PowerPoint presentation for young people's consideration and completion.

## 2.5 Others

2.5.1 Whilst the preferred methodology for receiving responses was either through the online questionnaire or hard copy; the Education Authority were prepared to accept all written responses provided they were submitted prior to the closing date of the consultation.

# 3 INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

3.1 The survey was conducted through 'Survey Monkey' online, which was live from the 14 November 2016 until the 6 February 2017. There were 1378 online responses and 5 late

responses, which were discounted. The comments and responses were collated and used to inform this report.

There were 472 hard copy responses, and 1 late hard copy response which was discounted. These were all added to the comments and responses that had been provided online.

As well as responses to the questionnaire, some members of the public provided written responses or letters, and all of these received an acknowledgement of receipt. Some of these submissions were from young people, school or service users from whom there were 5 received and a further 1 that was late and so discounted. There were 45 written submissions received and a further 5 which were late and so discounted.

Finally, some members of the public organised campaign responses, some of which were based on text provided by a trade union, and 295 were received, with 42 discounted because they were submitted late.

All of these responses to the questionnaire have been collated, considered and are reflected within this report. The themes contained within campaign responses and petitions or letters have been included in the relevant section, alongside themes provided in comments from the questionnaires.

## 3.2 Responses to individual questions

3.2.1 The consultation process used an online consultation response pro forma facilitated through 'Survey Monkey' available via the EA website. A hard copy of the online consultations proforma was available at all workshops/presentations/information sessions to be either completed at the time or submitted later.

3.2.2 A number of respondents replied via letter and some responses submitted were substantial documents.

3.2.3 **Please Note - Key to tables:** where respondents were asked to 'agree' or 'disagree', if the majority response was 'agree' it has been highlighted in green, and if a majority 'disagreed' it has been highlighted in red.

## 3.3 Question 1

3.3.1 This question created an option for the respondents to provide their name, or the name of the school responding, or the name of the organisation responding. There was the facility of allowing anonymous respondents.

3.3.2 In total 1850 responses were received, both online and hard copy.

### 3.4 Question 2

Q2 - Please select the category that best describes you as a respondent: (Please select one box only)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Parent/Guardian	15.47	280
Pupil	24.31	440
Member of School Staff (Teaching)	18.40	333
Member of School Staff (Non-Teaching)	3.92	71
Governor (Individual)	0.72	13
Board of Governors	0.61	11
Education/Sectoral Support	4.86	88
Political Representative	0.50	9
Local Government Representative	0.17	3
General Public	12.82	232
Other	18.29	331
answered question		1810
skipped question		40

3.4.1 The greatest number of respondents was young people (24.31%) and then teachers (18.40%), and those who considered themselves 'other' (18.29%). This is appropriate given that the majority of users of Residential and Outdoor Centres are schools.

### 3.5 Question 3

Q3 -Please indicate the Residential and Outdoor Education Centre(s) to which your comments relate:	
Answer Options	Centre Count
Ardnabannon Outdoor Education Centre	497
Ballyhome Centre	77
Bushmills Outdoor Education Centre	574
Corrick Centre	70
Crawfordsburn Scout Centre, Scout Association	106
Delamont Outdoor Education Centre	569
Derganagh House	78
Ganaway Activity and Residential Centre, Boys' Brigade	135
Gortatole Outdoor Education Centre	195
Greenhill YMCA	294
Killowen Outdoor Education Centre	508
Killyleagh Outdoor Education Centre	323
Lorne Training and Activity Centre, Girl Guiding Ulster	83
Rocky Mountain Centre, Boys' Brigade	35
Shannaghmore Outdoor Education Centre	205
Share Residential Outdoor Activity Centre	180
Shepherd's Lodge Mountain Centre, Boys' Brigade	61
Woodhall Residential Centre	185
Other (please specify)	66
answered question	1817
skipped question	33

- 3.5.1 Respondents were required to indicate to which centre or OEC's their responses related. This question received 1817 responses, and 33 did not respond indicating that 99.45% of respondents provided the name of an Outdoor Education Centre or OEC's to which their comments related. The majority of respondents chose to indicate that their responses were to multiple OEC's. Fewest respondents related their responses to self-catering OEC's or voluntary OEC's, namely 286 and 833 respectively.



### 3.6 Question 4

Q4 -The review recommends that a specific policy should be developed for Outdoor Learning OEC's which clearly links to the youth service and schools curriculum and policy; measuring outcomes through the development of Performance Indicators. Do you agree or disagree with this recommendation?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	64.86	982
Disagree	17.64	267
Uncertain	17.50	265
answered question		1514
skipped question		336

3.6.1 The majority of respondents agreed with the recommendation to develop a policy with clear links to the Youth Service and Schools curriculum with appropriate and measurable outcomes.

### 3.7 Question 5

Q5 - The review recommends that the OEC's are renamed "Outdoor Learning OEC's". Do you agree or disagree with this recommendation?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	39.31	596
Disagree	32.32	490
Uncertain	28.36	430
answered question		1516
skipped question		334

3.7.1 The respondents offered an even spread of opinion about changing the name of OEC's, with 83% giving an opinion. Of those who did, the majority of 39.31% agreed with the change of name.

### 3.8 Question 6

Q6 - The review recommends that programmes delivered by the statutory Outdoor Learning OEC's will support area plans for youth services and promote local delivery by peripatetic provision in schools and youth clubs in response to assessed need. In addition it indicates the main statutory OEC's will operate Monday to Friday to meet the needs of schools and the youth service will secure provision from the voluntary sector. Do you agree or disagree with this recommendation?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	26.93	408
Disagree	57.10	865
Uncertain	27.85	422
answered question		1515
skipped question		335

3.8.1 Almost 60% of the respondents disagreed with the recommendation.

### 3.9 Question 7

Q7 - The review recommends that consideration should be given to the range of staff employed within the provision with; • Soft Facilities Management staff, including Catering and Cleaning staff, being managed by central EA services which will provide specialist advice, training and supervision • a range of professional staff delivering on agreed outcomes; for example teachers, youth workers and outdoor instructors • all the professional staff will have access to a professional development programme based on assessed need. Do you agree or disagree with this recommendation?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	63.80	966
Disagree	21.99	333
Uncertain	14.20	215
answered question		1514
skipped question		336

3.9.1 This question was responded to by 82% of the respondents and although there were very few comments provided, the overwhelming majority supported this change to provide specialist advice, training and supervision, as well as a professional development programme for staff.

### 3.10 Question 8

Q8 - The review recommends that there should be a collaborative approach between the statutory and voluntary sectors in the development of residential and outdoor activities and provision. Do you agree or disagree with this recommendation?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	59.83	907
Disagree	11.61	176
Uncertain	26.12	396
answered question		1516
skipped question		334

3.10.1 Over 1,500 respondents replied to this recommendation. Almost 60% agreed with the recommendation to the development of a collaborative approach between the statutory and voluntary sectors on the delivery of outdoor education.

### 3.11 Question 9

Q9 - The review recommends that the Duke of Edinburgh's Award should continue to be supported by staff as deemed appropriate. Do you agree or disagree with this recommendation?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	73.33	1111
Disagree	3.37	51
Uncertain	23.30	353

answered question	1515
skipped question	335

3.11.1 A significant majority of respondents (73.33%) considered that the Duke of Edinburgh's Award should continue to be supported by staff.

### 3.12 Question 10

Q10 - The review recommends that the existing self-catering premises, namely Ballyhome, Corrick and Derganagh, remain in service. Do you agree or disagree with this recommendation?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	51.12	774
Disagree	9.45	143
Uncertain	39.43	597
answered question		1514
skipped question		336

3.12.1 Just over 50% of the respondents agreed with the recommendation.

### 3.13 Question 11

Q11 - The review recommends that consideration should be given to the development of Killyleagh OEC as self-catered provision. Do you agree or disagree with this recommendation?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	25.73	389
Disagree	39.55	598
Uncertain	34.72	525
answered question		1512
skipped question		338

3.13.1 Almost 40% of the respondents disagreed with the recommendation.

### 3.14 Question 12

Q12 -The review recommends reducing the number of EA statutory OEC's; it is proposed to achieve this by closing Ardnabannon, Bushmills, Delamont and Killowen. Do you agree or disagree with this recommendation?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	5.88	89
Disagree	88.43	1338
Uncertain	5.68	86
answered question		1513
skipped question		337

3.14.1 The proposed closing of the four OEC’s, Bushmills, Ardnabannon, Delamont and Killowen elicited a very robust response from the respondents. All four OEC’s received very fulsome praise for the programmes and experiences they offered young people and leaders/teachers.

### 3.15 Question 13

Q13 - It is recommended that savings achieved from this review will be deployed to front line youth services assessed as needed within local communities. Do you agree or disagree with this recommendation?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	26.34	398
Disagree	38.25	578
Uncertain	35.41	535
answered question		1511
skipped question		344

3.15.1 Respondents were required to agree or disagree with the recommendation that savings achieved through the review be redeployed to front line youth services. It is immediately apparent that there were almost as many uncertain (35.41%) as disagreed (38.25%) with the recommendation.

### 3.16 Question 14: Comments

3.16.1 An opportunity was provided for comments to be made in question 14, and there were 286 comments made in the hard copy questionnaires and 883 through the online questionnaires. This meant that 63% of respondents provided a comment to support their views with 37% making no comment.

3.16.2 All organisational responses, letters and petitions have been considered and collated to identify key themes enabling the EA to consider further recommendations or alternative models of delivery. This information is noted within the report.

### 3.17 Question 15 - 21 Section 75 responses

3.17.1 An opportunity was provided for respondents to determine their opinion of the impact of the recommendations on persons who may be identified under Section 75 who may have particular needs that would require additional support or requirements.

### 3.18 Quantitative Analysis

3.18.1 Of the respondents who completed the survey online and in hard copy, 69% answered this question and 31% did not respond at all.

Section 75 Category	Positive	Negative	I do not wish to provide an opinion
Religious Belief	18.88%	42.18%	38.94%
Political Opinion	16.39%	40.66%	42.95%
Racial Group	19.50%	39.10%	41.40%
Age	20.26%	41.96%	37.78%
Marital Status	15.56%	23.68	60.77
Sexual Orientation	16.48	31.29	52.32
Gender	19.49	34.97	45.55
Disability	19.98	45.60	34.42
Dependents	17.81	33.93	48.26

### 3.19 Qualitative Analysis (based on comments received through online responses, hard copies, petitions, letters from individuals and organisations)

3.19.1 A significant minority of the respondents considered that a review of provision in this area would negatively impact on equality of opportunity or promotion of good relations with regard to: Religious Belief; Political Opinion; Racial Group; Age; Sexual Orientation; Gender; Disability and Dependents. A minority of respondents believed that this review would impact negatively on Marital Status. (significant minority is 30% - 49%; minority is >29%)

### 3.20 Religious Belief

3.20.1 A significant minority of respondents considered that religious belief would be negatively impacted through the implementation of the review. This was primarily related to opportunities for participants from different religious background engaging together in a neutral venue. There was a shared understanding that Outdoor Education and Residential Centres provided such an opportunity and noted this may be lost. Young people concurred with this opinion and commented that an opportunity to integrate across religions would be lost by closures.

### 3.21 Political Opinion

3.21.1 A significant minority of respondents were of the opinion that outdoor activities had provided a positive opportunity for young people to meet others from different political traditions, and were concerned that having fewer OEC's would lessen these opportunities, particularly for larger groups engaged in 'Shared Education'.

### **3.22 Age**

3.22.1 A significant minority of respondents recognised the value of Outdoor Education experiences being provided from a young age and supporting appreciation of the outdoor world. There was recognition also of the opportunities provided through the Youth Service for training for staff and other adults. Young people were most frequently found to refer to the potential impact on them through closures.

### **3.23 Disability**

3.23.1 A significant minority of respondents commented on the negative impact that the closure of OEC's may have for young people with disabilities. This included concerns over the distance expected to travel to visit an OEC; whether the OEC's that remained could adequately provide activities as has been the case; whether staff was sufficiently trained to deliver programmes for young people with disabilities and whether the range of activities provided would be appropriate. The comments also recognised the valuable contribution that OEC's had made in providing equal access and opportunities for young people in the past, in spite of their disability. Young people reflected a similar opinion.

### **3.24 Racial Group**

3.24.1 A significant minority of respondents were concerned that the reduction in the number of places may prevent young people's opportunity to engage with others of different cultural or racial groups. Young people were concerned that the opportunity to integrate would be impacted.

### **3.25 Marital status**

3.25.1 No specific comments have been made in respect of marital status.

### **3.26 Sexual Orientation**

3.26.1 No specific comments have been made in respect of sexual orientation.

### **3.27 Gender**

3.27.1 No specific comments have been made in respect of gender.

### **3.28 Dependents**

3.28.1 No specific comments have been made in respect of dependents.

### **3.29 Equality Responses - young people**

3.29.1 In the responses from young people it is evident that there was some confusion about the 'negative or positive' impact response required, and therefore their answers have not been taken into account. They frequently commented that they did not understand the question or know what was required from their response.

## 4 ORGANISATIONS REPOSES TO CONSULTATION

The following is a summary of comments made by organisations and submitted as responses.

### 4.1 Trade Unions:

4.1.1 The Trade Unions would like the full process to recommence in partnership with them. They suggest that all OEC's should be kept open and that youth organisations, schools and other groups should be offered a choice of venues. The Trade Unions criticised EA for failing to engage staff and themselves in this review process. It should also be noted that one Trade Union was late with their survey return.

4.1.2 They also commented that they are open to reform, and consider that the OEC's are front line services, therefore money spent here is appropriate and meets needs. They considered that the peripatetic outdoor education provision is not an alternative to residential services; and were concerned that Trade Unions were not involved with consultation or the review from the commencement of the process.

### 4.2 Sporting Bodies

4.2.1 It was suggested that there was a lack of awareness of the facilities on offer and that the OEC's needed to be marketed better with particular emphasis on the health benefits arising from using them. They also suggested that the OEC's should be opened for access by all sporting organisations. Concern was raised about the use of Survey Monkey as an appropriate consultation vehicle.

4.2.2 Some offered professional support for service delivery and training as an opportunity to allow young people access a greater range of activities and suggested that the EA would work with OEC's to deliver activities. They proposed that closure of OEC's would limit the safe delivery of water sports, especially if Killowen were closed, as the benefits of open water there for sailing were very good. As an additional source of revenue, they suggested opening OEC's to the private and corporate sector.

4.2.3 It was considered that the Programme for Government would impact the review once agreed and that the strategy proposal was positive, leading to increased investment in outdoor activities. They considered that the collaboration and communication between the voluntary and statutory sector should be based on equality and a strong marketing and engagement plan be put in place. Seeking alternative uses of OEC's over weekends and off peak times could generate revenue and support the further development of outdoor activities.

4.2.4 The benefits of outdoor activities would impact on the health and well-being of young people and the wider community.

### 4.3 Youth Organisations

4.3.1 Some noted that the questionnaire was confusing and more importantly not sufficiently differentiated for young people. They suggested that an income stream could be generated by increasing charges to schools for usage of Residential and Outdoor OEC's.

4.3.2 In response to the review, it was suggested that the proposed booking system should not be detrimental to the voluntary sector and that schools should choose the venue they require considering all the choice available. Reiteration of the collaborative approach between statutory and voluntary sectors was again highlighted and this would entail training together to provide suitable school programmes linked to the curriculum. This would widen choice and also allow voluntary OEC's greater access to school groups.

4.3.3 Others welcomed the indication of savings and noted that the voluntary sector has historically had little or no financial assistance from Education for this service. They affirmed that the evidence shows young people value Outdoor Education. ETI reports, they suggested should be better recognised and used to indicate good practice and they requested that the booking system be open and transparent and not curtail flexibility and independence of choice.

4.3.4 The media commentary that has emerged, they considered has been unhelpful and inaccurate and noted that the voluntary sector did not respond to it.

4.3.5 Suggestions for sharing technical services, training and professional development of staff were provided as alternatives, but that this should be assured by the funding following the child and leading to a cost effective, flexible model of provision, based on strong equal partnerships with the EA.

4.3.6 They welcomed a joint model of delivery, training and curriculum development for Residential and Outdoor Education and agree that it is very much about the Personal and Social Development of young people. Outdoor Education promotes both the physical and mental well-being of young people. Outdoor Education should further develop the links with school curriculum. Elements such as shared workforce development, collaborative working, funding to follow the child, joint partnerships; joint training and sharing ideas and resources could enhance provision across both the voluntary and statutory sector.

4.3.7 Acknowledgment was made that the review was comprehensive and evidence based and promoted the best use of resources and any savings should be invested in workforce development.

4.3.8 They state that the voluntary sector adds value and welcomes the development of an Outdoor Education policy and strategy. The new strategy should include joint training and develop systems to evaluate the impact of Residential and Outdoor Education.



- 4.3.9 It was also stated that the booking system should be open and transparent.
- 4.3.10 It was suggested that Outdoor Education Centres should register as Alternative Activity Providers for the provision of programmes to award participants the Duke of Edinburgh Award.
- 4.3.11 They agreed with the name change to Outdoor Learning Centres and considered that they should be kept open at weekends to support income generation and wider usage.
- 4.3.12 Finally, it was suggested that learning outside the classroom raises educational standards; therefore they consider the proposed closures unequal and unfair, giving rise to a disparity of access to activities and no proper application of section 75.

#### **4.4 Community organisations**

- 4.4.1 They were critical of the use of Survey Monkey as they felt that it was not fit for purpose and felt the review would reduce access to OEC's for community groups and disabled groups.
- 4.4.2 They considered that there was no clear rationale for closure and that the report lacks sound evidence. Particularly that they did not think that OEC's were like for like with the voluntary sector, as there was no equivalent service regarding value for money and high standards.
- 4.4.3 They also thought that a collaborative approach is the best way forward in relation to the suggested closures, as this would reduce choice and quality on offer to groups. They suggested that it was important that weekends and day visits should continue and increase summer month usage.

#### **4.5 Political and local government organisations**

- 4.5.1 Responses were submitted raising a number of issues. They stated that the use of Survey Monkey tool was most unsatisfactory.
- 4.5.2 They are totally opposed to the proposed closure of all OEC's.
- 4.5.3 There is concern about the impact on the local economy if centres close.
- 4.5.4 They are of the opinion that there was a lack of consultation with staff.
- 4.5.5 They are of the further opinion that disengagement by the statutory sector, and provision of Outdoor Education services by the voluntary sector is not viable as, particularly in North Antrim, there is a lack of voluntary sector provision.
- 4.5.6 They highlighted that EA provision is affordable and that Outdoor Education provides quality training for adults.
- 4.5.7 Respondents felt that the £1.3m savings is false.

## **4.6 Faith Organisations**

- 4.6.1 Some organisations have used OEC's for a number of years including taking groups of disabled young people on residential. They feel that closing OEC's is short-sighted and ill-advised as no other provision can meet their requirements particularly for disability access.
- 4.6.2 They consider that closure of OEC's goes against one of the overarching goals in Outdoor Education - that of increasing access and equality.
- 4.6.3 They highlighted the excellent facilities and staff who offer quality programmes.
- 4.6.4 They consider that closure would impact the local economies and the loss of livelihood would be suffered by staff.

## **4.7 Elected Representatives**

- 4.7.1 Ten individual, elected representatives from across the political divide, 4 Members of Parliament (2 DUP, 1 Independent Unionist and 1 SDLP) and 6 Members of Local Assembly (4 DUP, 1 UUP and 1 SDLP) responded to the Consultation on the Review of Residential and Outdoor Education.
- 4.7.2 All respondents were supportive of Outdoor Education and highlighted concerns particularly about closures of OEC's in their constituencies. Among the issues highlighted were the benefit that Outdoor Education had for the young people; loss of employment; lack of opportunities for young people from disadvantaged communities; learning outside the classroom; impact on local communities and loss of OEC's large enough to cater for bigger groups.
- 4.7.3 Further comments were made by the elected representatives in relation to the use of Survey Monkey as a consultative tool; the need to realign Outdoor Education budgets; creating opportunities for alternative revenue generation and that the service should best meet the needs of young people within the available resources.
- 4.7.4 It was also stated that the Peripatetic Outdoor Education Service does not compare to the opportunities provided by the residential centres.

## **4.8 Additional comments**

- 4.8.1 The respondents generally welcomed the review, the consultation, and the opportunity to respond to the recommendations.
- 4.8.2 There were a number of comments relating to the use of Survey Monkey, the format of the questions and the mechanisms of collation. Most organisations, who responded to the Review of Residential and Outdoor Education, were critical of the means of collecting the responses. The respondents highlighted three key issues;
  - Using Survey Monkey as a tool to collect responses meant that online access may have not been available to all

- Concerns were raised that the questionnaire was confusing and not sufficiently differentiated and could therefore be construed as biased or leading
- The impression that the survey was not young person friendly, nor were they sufficiently involved

*It should be noted that opportunity was provided for a range of responses and all of these have been taken into consideration for this report.*

- 4.8.3 Many respondents noted the valuable contribution OEC's had offered over many years and the obvious enjoyment young people gained from attending; with some using their own experiences to emphasise the value it had been to them personally.
- 4.8.4 In relation to the recommendations, a number of respondents noted that Priorities for Youth Policy required a review of the youth estate and not just the Outdoor OEC's.
- 4.8.5 Others promoted outdoor education as a contributor to healthy living and the appreciation young people gained of the outdoors through such activities, suggesting it could support efforts to tackle obesity and poor mental health.
- 4.8.6 Some respondents wanted it noted that their concerns related to the collation of evidence within the review itself and the subsequent conclusions that were drawn. They suggested comparisons with other providers would have emphasised the value of statutory provision. These included the dilution of provision, the number of beds available, the impact on local economies and the perceived lack of investment in some OEC's.
- 4.8.7 There were concerns raised as to the impact on staff in relation to job losses and the redeployment of auxiliary staff.
- 4.8.8. It was noted that there would be repercussions for closures on the access young people may have to OEC's and a concern that the voluntary sector may not have the capacity, expertise or ability to compensate for this.
- 4.8.9. Although it was recognised that the cost of running OEC's was high, the value added for young people was considered adequate justification and there were concerns about raising prices, or the cost of using voluntary organisations.
- 4.8.10 Transport costs would also be an issue if participants were forced to travel to a centre that was quite distant.
- 4.8.11 Some considered that the Youth Service should not subsidise Outdoor OEC's which were predominantly used by schools.
- 4.8.12 Many welcomed the opportunity for the voluntary and statutory sector to work more closely together, particularly in relation to training, sharing resources and widening participation.

- 4.8.13 The recommendation that some Outdoor Education OEC's may be closed was referenced a number of times and elements of these concerns are reflected above. The proposed closing of the four OEC's, namely Bushmills, Ardnabannon, Delamont and Killowen elicited a very robust response from the respondents. All four OEC's received very fulsome praise for the programmes and experiences they offered young people and leaders/teachers.
- 4.8.14 All OEC's were praised for the work they did and the impact they had on the young people who attended them. Each of the OEC's was highlighted for specific strengths allied to the delivery of programmes within their centre.
- 4.8.15 Respondents felt that **Bushmills** was good at supporting disability and offered lots of activities. Some respondents stated that closing the centre would mean that there was no other provision in the area and therefore lack of opportunities for schools and young people.
- 4.8.16 There were some concerns that the data provided was inaccurate and that there was insufficient evidence provided to make the recommendation that the centre be closed.
- 4.8.17 Respondents stated that **Ardnabannon** should be kept open and that EA should reflect on the impact that the centre had on young people.
- 4.8.18 It was stated that **Delamont** should be kept open; it was close to Belfast, a good location and there was potential for onsite development. The training offered by the centre was stated by some respondents to be excellent and it should be open all year and at weekends.
- 4.8.19 There were some concerns that when activities were programmed for off-site it required extended travel time.
- 4.8.20 **Killowen** was stated by some respondents to have good pastoral care and was a good experience for young people who were away from home for the first time. It was stated that it was the "best P7 residential" venue. Some respondents commented that there was an "inclusive" atmosphere in the centre.
- 4.8.21 Other respondents commented on the fact that there had been "good" capital investment at the centre and this had enhanced the programmes on offer.
- 4.8.22 In relation to Field Studies at **Killowen**, it was stated that there was a range of field work available and that it was very safe for this type of work with students.
- 4.8.23 Some respondents stated that it was very expensive to undertake residential and fieldwork elsewhere.
- 4.8.24 Respondents made some comments about other OEC's and were very positive about the experiences and opportunities provided by Gortatole, Shannagh-More and Woodhall.

## 5 ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA

5.1.1 The data compiled from the survey was collated and thoroughly analysed. There were no significant themes identified that impact on the acceptance of the recommendations made for Residential and Outdoor Education, however the following key proposals were made:

- Accessibility: sufficient capacity within outdoor education to permit all young people access to outdoor activities without onerous transport.
- Collaborative working between the voluntary and statutory sector should be promoted particularly in shared training; development of staff and volunteers and sharing best practice.
- Generating additional revenue streams should be considered in order to maintain a range of provision and further access for young people.

5.1.2 The information provided in all of the responses will be referenced as the EA considers the future model for the provision of Residential and Outdoor Education.

Association of Heads of Outdoor Ed OEC's in NI (AHOEC)  
Brownlow Integrated College  
Canoe Association of NI  
Causeway Glens Borough Council's Leisure and Development Committee  
Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI)  
Ciaran McAlinden  
Coleraine Primary Principles' Group  
Daniel Hamilton  
Jim Shannon MP, DUP on behalf of constituent  
Dr Pauline Mulligan, Cornmarket Surgery, NEWRY  
Drumcree Community Trust  
Eagle Fellowship Committee  
Gerry Meehan  
Girl Guiding Ulster  
Heather Brown PS teacher (sent from Banbridge Chronical).  
Jim Wells MLA on behalf of Sean Cooper (general public)  
Keith McCaugherty  
Kelsie Erskine  
Killyleagh Outdoor Education Staff  
L Simpson  
Lady Hermon MP on behalf of Christopher Massey (Brooklands PS Teacher)  
Margaret Ritchie  
Mark Hudson  
NASUWT  
NI Sports Forum  
NI Youth Forum  
NIPSA  
Paul Givan MLA on behalf of his general constituents  
Peter Weir, DUP, Minister of Education  
RAG consolidated response  
Roy Beggs MLA on behalf of his general constituents  
RYA Northern Ireland  
Sammy Wilson MP on behalf of Principal of Glynn PS  
Shelley Spiers  
Sinead Bradley MLA  
Stephen Ferris  
Stewart Magill  
The Boys Brigade NI  
Tim and Gillian Parr  
Unison NI  
Ursula Meehan  
YMCA Greenhill  
Youth & Schools Co-Ordinator at Crown Jesus Ministries  
Youth Council NI