Item 5

25th January 2024

Glasgow City Council

Education, Skills and Early Years City Policy Committee

Report by Executive Director of Education Services

Contact: Neil Wightwick (Blairvadach)

OUTDOOR LEARNING IN EDUCATION SERVICES, GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL - BLAIRVADACH OUTDOOR EDUCATION SERVICES REPORT

Purpose of Report:

1. Provide an update on the current service - functions, occupancy, and outlook.
2. Provide an overview of broader outdoor learning activity within the city

Recommendations:

The Committee are asked to note the contents of the report and ask the Executive Director to bring future updates about the work as appropriate

Ward No(s):	Citywide: ✓
Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐ No ☐	consulted: Yes ☐ No ☐

1. Introduction

1.1 As 2022 progressed, the Blairvadach Services returned to pre-pandemic operating levels. In addition, the delayed transformation packages to pricing, staffing structures and programme content all took effect, delivering a more predictable budget and sustainable operations. All leading to the goal of becoming a 'Centre of Excellence for Sustainability".

1.1.1 Pricing - first full financial year of ‘group’ pricing at the residential centre and delivering pricing parity for GCC pupils all year round

1.1.2 Staffing structures – delivered a revitalised team structure more in aligned with the new demands on the service

1.1.3 Programme content – revised to align with learning for Sustainability (LfS) strategy and deliver increased national accreditation.

1.2 Demand for the residential service continues to be greater than our capacity to supply.

Pinkston has demonstrated some occupancy challenges for schools, the main contributing factor is access to transport.

DofE has a presence in *all* mainstream Secondary Schools and is complimented by a virtual DofE centre to work with ASL schools and units who cannot support their own programme.

The therapeutic intervention outdoor team continue to deliver maximum impact experiences for the most vulnerable young people in care and not fully engaged with school.

1.3 Nationally, the benefits of learning outdoors and specifically residential outdoor education have been further recognised. In this arena, Glasgow City Council continues to lead the way providing inclusive opportunities for its young people. The service eagerly awaits the outcome of the Outdoor Education Residential Bill and continue to feed into the evolving Education Scotland Learning for Sustainability Strategy.

2. Blairvadach Service Resource

2.1 **Residential Outdoor Education Centre**. A residential base 45 minutes from Glasgow in Rhu, next to the Gareloch, the Centre offers a range of water and land based curricular linked outdoor education programmes that support the development of people as successful learners and effective contributors.

2.2 **Blairvadach at Pinkston Basin**. A city centre base at the Pinkston Watersports Centre. This Centre offers non-residential outdoor education programmes based around the John Muir Award and National Paddlesports Awards. The Blairvadach hub at the Pinkston basin offers access to high-quality circular linked outdoor education service in the city centre. The facility has a focus on delivering our urban John Muir Award and national proficiency awards in kayaking and canoeing.

2.3 **Therapeutic Intervention Outdoor Education**. In partnership with Glasgow Virtual School, the instructional team work with young people who struggle to engage with schools and are care experienced. The therapeutic intervention outdoor education programme builds trust, resilience and confidence in young people. In many cases, this programme is the only formal education engagement these young people have

2.4 **Duke of Edinburgh Award (DofE)**. The DofE Glasgow Team, build capacity for the award across the city through leader training, direct schools support and delivering initiatives to drive the award forward. Every mainstream secondary school in Glasgow provides a DofE programme

2.5 **Training and Resources**. Blairvadach supports schools through outdoor learning training for teachers, resources and special projects. Staff have now mapped every school for orienteering and provide a wide range of maintained outdoor learning resources

3. Occupancy and Outlook

3.1 Residential Centre

3.1.1 The occupancy for the residential centre over the current financial year is at its highest level ever. The demand for the service continues to outstrip the ability of the centre to supply. The new pricing structure which delivers parity for bookings at any time of the year has enabled more of Glasgow's young people to benefit from the resource than ever before

3.1.2 72% of pupils rated the residential experience as highly adventurous. Gorge Walking and Scrambling (a bit like caving) were voted the most adventurous experiences. 98% of those pupils who were nervous or anxious before those activities reported feeling proud after. The most challenging aspect of the residential experience is 'Staying Away from Home' (33%) closely followed by the 'Adventurous activities' (29%)

3.1.3 The service that Blairvadach provides gives young people the opportunity to face and overcome challenge in a safe and supportive environment.

3.1.4 97% of schools report the experience as excellent at improving pupil self-confidence and self-reliance

3.1.5 Young people leave their course knowing they can cope emotionally and physically in challenging situations. These intrinsic personal and social developments are seamlessly interlinked with broad general education outcomes which create a unique learning environment. 95% of schools report experiences as good or excellent at imparting an understanding of 'how humans impact the natural environment'

3.1.6 The full report can be found at: https://www.blairvadach.org.uk/Content/UserGenerated/Image/Downloads/BlairvadachImpactReport2022-23.pdf

3.2 Pinkston Basin

3.2.1 806 Pupils took part in the 4-day John Muir Award at Pinkston Basin

3.2.2 55% of schools stated that the usefulness of the John Muir Award at linking to their STEM work was excellent

3.2.3 88% of schools state that the curricular links to LfS were very good or excellent

3.2.4 89% of schools stated that the curricular links to health and wellbeing (HWB) were good, very good or excellent

3.2.5 The full report can be found here: https://www.blairvadach.org.uk/Content/UserGenerated/Image/Downloads/BlairvadachImpactReport2022-23.pdf

3.3 Care Experience

3.3.1 This year was the second full year of partnership with Glasgow Virtual School to provide care experienced learners with one to one or small group therapeutic outdoor education experiences. Delivering 280 contact days to 23 young people. This high impact programme consistently delivers positive reports for young people in an otherwise chaotic and challenging life

3.3.2 The programme is aimed at care experienced young people who are having difficulty maintaining their school placement. The support

increases the learner's self-esteem, confidence and helps re-engage them back into a positive learning environment. As a result of taking part, pupils have developed their resilience, self-efficacy, social and emotional skills which have been transferred to improving educational outcomes. In addition, where possible pupils gain accreditation through national proficiency awards.

3.4 Duke of Edinburgh Award Team (DofE)

3.4.1 In 2022/23 there were 1782 enrolments and 879 DofE completions in Glasgow. This accounts for 10% of all enrolments and completions nationally

3.4.2 43% of all Glasgow enrolments are from SIMD 1-3, 9% from ASN and 28% from ethnic minority. Glasgow is leading the way nationally with these statistics

3.4.3 In 2022/23 the award contributed 19,266 hours of voluntary community service which equates to £92,669 of local economic benefit

3.4.4 1525 young people took part in an expedition, delivering a total of 5266 outdoor days on a DofE programme

3.4.5 The value of the award is demonstrated through the commitment by schools to incorporating it into curriculum time. 86% of schools dedicate at least one period a week to delivering the award.

3.4.6 The full 2022/2023 Glasgow DofE Impact report can be viewed here: www.dofeglasgow.org.uk/Websites/cmsDofEGlasgow/UserFiles/file/DofE%20Glasgow%20Impact%20Report%202022-2023.pdf

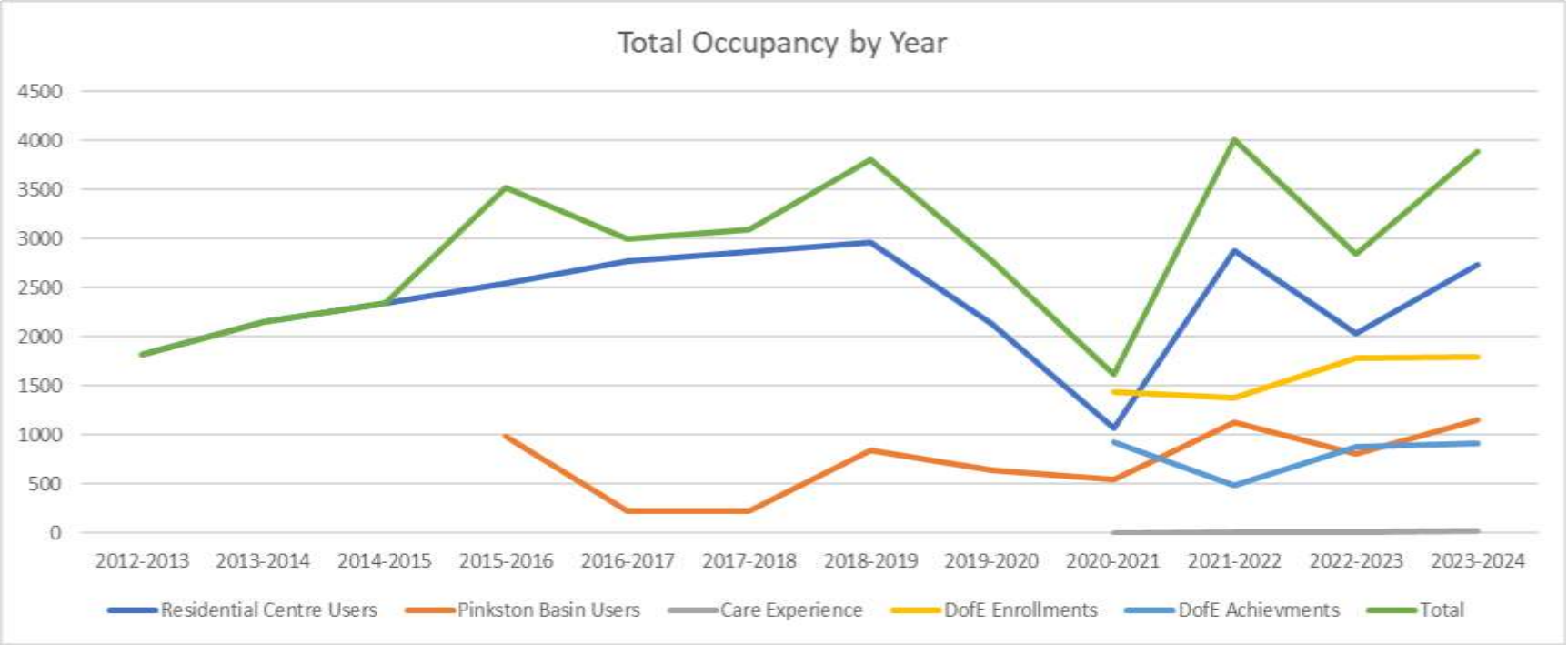
4. Current Service Levels

4.1 Historical Blairvadach Occupancy

The chart below demonstrates how the service has evolved since 2012

Points to note:

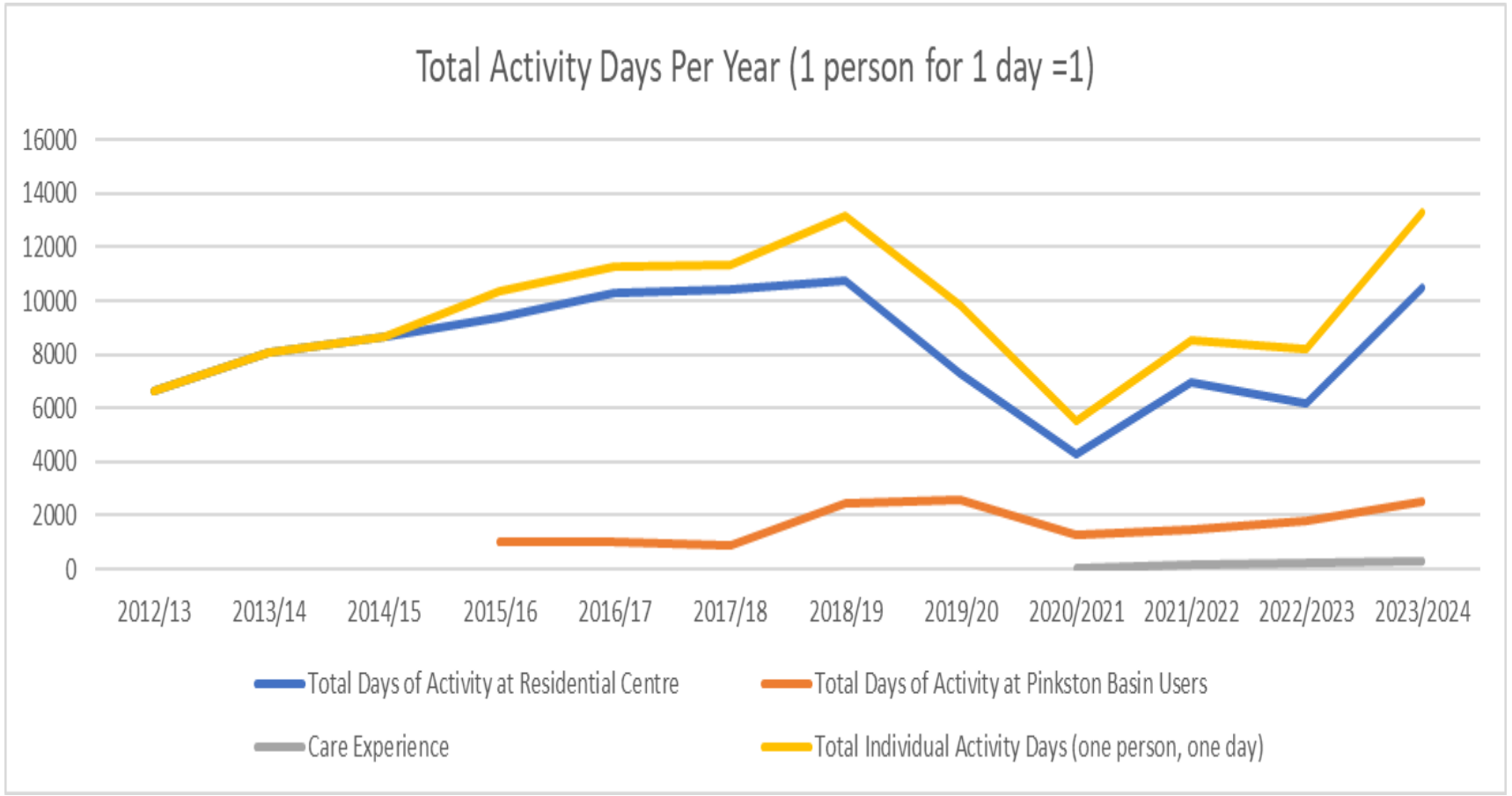
- The residential centre occupancy numbers include all schools' users, private users, and teacher CPD
- In 2021 the 'private' users to the residential centre were replaced with Glasgow schools' participants. This now includes Glasgow pupils using the facilities over weekend and during school holidays
- COVID had an impact on all services from 2019 until 2022
- Pinkston Basin was introduced to the service in 2015
- DofE and Care Experience delivery was introduced to the service in 2020



4.1 Total Service Delivery

There are many different lengths of program delivered by the service. In order to compare the levels of service delivered each year, we convert each course into ‘activity days’. One person, undertaking one day on a course equals one ‘activity day’.

The graph below demonstrates how the service has recovered from the pandemic steadily over the past 18 months.


Total Activity Days Per Year (1 person for 1 day =1)
16000
14000
12000
10000
8000
6000
4000
2000
0
2012/13
2013/14
2014/15
2015/16
2016/17
2017/18
2018/19
2019/20
2020/2021
2021/2022
2022/2023
2023/2024
Total Days of Activity at Residential Centre
Total Days of Activity at Pinkston Basin Users
Care Experience
Total Individual Activity Days (one person, one day)

5 Proposal to change the service name to reflect the current service delivery.

5.1 The Blairvadach Outdoor Education brand is synonymous with Glasgow schools and the wider sector with delivering high quality outdoor education programmes. To maintain the link with this brand and better describe the resources available within our service the following structure is recommended:



5.2 In 2024 Blairvadach Residential Centre will celebrate 50 years of service to Glasgow's citizens. There will be invitations to all our stakeholders to take part in a variety of celebratory events, competitions, and publicity through the BBC Landward programme.

5.3 As part of these 50-year celebrations, and looking forward to the next 50 years, the service should be restructured, and the branding revitalised to reflect new age.

6 Allocation of places.

Glasgow Schools are invited each year to note their interest in accessing the service for the following academic year. Once the service has gathered the data on all the interested schools, spaces are allocated through the following selection criteria:

Stage 1 - priority will be given to those schools who have not received the visit type requested for the longest period of time. Visit types include: midweek, weekend, or holiday time residential experiences. Schools who request a midweek slot but are willing to take a weekend will be prioritised for a midweek slot the following session. This approach allows more schools to receive a Blairvadach experience each year by alternating midweek(Monday through Friday) and weekend visits (Friday through Monday).

Stage 2 – where school have not received their preferred visit type, priority will be given to those with the highest SIMD

Stage 3 – where there is still capacity in the programme, space will be allocated to groups of the appropriate size. This does sometimes enable smaller groups to be allocated more frequently than larger groups.

Allocation Process Flow Chart October 2021 Onwards

7 Alignment - All Learners All Achieving

7.1 The very nature of the wider educational experiences and training facilitated by the Blairvadach services, intrinsically delivers personal and social development and character education. All building towards delivering strong outcomes relating to the four CfE capacities.

7.2 More specifically for Glasgow, the service is contributing directly to the Grand Challenges of the All Learners, All Achieving Strategy through:

7.2.1 Increasing the numbers young people achieving accredited personal achievement awards.

7.2.2 Supporting the Glasgow National Park city campaign and supporting local environmental conservation projects to provide nature-based learning opportunities for our schools.

8 Impact of Outdoor Learning Across Glasgow

8.1 Outdoor learning can enhance learning and teaching throughout the curriculum and should be viewed as an integral part of learning and teaching and not as a “bolt on” or as an alternative form of provision. Outdoor learning has often been associated with specific curricular areas such as science, social studies and health and wellbeing, but opportunities for rich, in-depth, and progressive learning in the outdoors exist for all curricular areas. In fact, by giving young people the opportunity to engage in “real world” learning out with the occasionally restrictive classroom environment, knowledge and understanding will often be enhanced

8.2 Physical, emotional, and mental health have been shown to be enhanced by access to greenspaces and in particular through contact with nature. Research has demonstrated the positive impacts on behaviour, on self-worth and on emotional wellbeing that taking learning outdoors can have. It has also been shown that young people who fully engage with learning out with the classroom have greater levels of physical fitness and motor skills development

8.3 The 2011, Taking Learning Outdoors strategy was the last specific outdoor learning strategy set out for Glasgow City Council Education Services. Outdoor learning has now evolved into a common pedagogy within some schools. However, there is still a huge cultural shift required to normalise learning outdoors within our schools, especially across the Secondary estate.

8.4 The table 7.4 below demonstrates a strategy enabling Outdoor Learning to become an entitlement for each pupil at every stage within their education journey:

Table 7.4

Outdoor Learning Entitlements and Access – Glasgow City Council

	Early Years	Primary 1-4	Primary 4-7	Secondary S1-S3	Secondary S4-S6
Entitlement	•Visits to local green space •Engage with natural environment every day •Grow plants and vegetables	•Day visits to local park / woodland •One night residential experience •Beach adventure •Out every day for a lesson	•Outdoor Journey •Experience adventurous activities •PSD Residential •One lesson every day outside •National outdoor award	•National Outdoor Activity Award •Frequent Outdoor Learning across a range of subjects •Outdoor Education Skills Acquisition Award	Access to: •Supported study residentials across a range of subjects •Frequent Outdoor Learning across a range of subjects
Facilitated by	Class teacher and service support staff				
Supported by GCC Services Through	Practitioner CPD*, Access to outdoor space	Ranger Service, Residential Provision*, Practitioner CPD*, Local OE Providers*, PEPASS		Local OE Providers* Practitioner CPD* DofE Glasgow, OL Mentoring*, Residential Provision*, STEM and Geography Field Studies*, Therapeutic Outdoor Education (SW)	
Example methods delivery	•Use of outdoor space within establishments, engaging with local parks and green space, Internal and external practitioner CPD, frequent access to local green space, always exploring ways to get outside…….				
		•Local and national residential options, access National and Regional Parks, External Providers, John Muir Award…..			
				DofE Awards, Educational Visits, Supported Study (residential and non), National Proficiency Awards, Modern Apprenticeships, Mentoring Schemes……	

* Provided by Blairvadach Services

8.5 The responses from a recent Pupil Voice Forum demonstrated that pupils valued learning outdoors and wanted to have more opportunities for this to take place. Surprisingly Secondary pupils stated that they saw the outdoors as an environment that they could learn more in whilst taking a break from the classroom. Secondary pupils went on to state that they would like to see more opportunities to get outdoors. These responses align with our anecdotal evidence that outdoor learning in secondary schools is not as well established as in other sectors.

8.6 Data from the forum also demonstrates that pupils ranked the availability of subsidised pricing to allow for inclusive experiences, as the most important aspect to be considered when allocating resources.

8.7 The full report from the Outdoor Learning pupil forum can be found here: https://www.blairvadach.org.uk/Content/UserGenerated/Image/Downloads/SeptemberSchoolForumOutdoorLearningOutcomes.docx

9 Feedback

In their own words: Some quotes from teachers and parents about their experience with our service:

9.1 Class Teacher comment on Pinkston Basin:

"Allowing the class to experience a variety of outdoor learning experiences which utilise their skills/knowledge into meaningful contexts while allowing them to connect with their surroundings. To build self-esteem, communication, and teamwork skills by taking part in activities they would otherwise not get the chance to experience"

9.2 Parent of pupil undertaking a therapeutic programme:

"In the early days you invested time in getting to know him, building trust and relationship through being consistent and being there, irrespective of whether he was able to participate in the planned activity"

When he was anxious you listened, understood, and found an alternative that eased his sensory overwhelm. He felt heard and validated.

And little by little you built his skills and abilities, helping restore some confidence and self-belief. Able to push his boundaries because you are trusted to do the right thing when he feels out of control.

We'll be forever grateful for all that you've done for him, and us, over these last 18 months. The boy that leaves Blairvadach today is a very different boy to the one that entered in December 2021. And that's down to you. Thank you"

9.3 Glasgow Primary Teacher feedback on a residential experience:

"For the majority of our pupils all of whom have additional support "The instructors encouraged all pupils, inspiring them and encouraging them to achieve and complete activities and tasks they thought were not possible. Then by reminding the pupils of their achievements, all pupils grew in confidence, developed their growth mindset and sense of self-worth"

9.4 Glasgow ASL Teacher feedback on a residential experience:

"For the majority of our pupils who have additional support needs, this was the first time they had been away from their parents. They exceeded all our expectations with the support of the Blairvadach staff. Not only did they develop their independent living and social skills. It was notable across the week the change in their confidence all of them pushed themselves to their own limits. What was heart lifting was the support they provided each other, identifying each other's strengths and weaknesses, and using these to ensure they all had the best time"

10 Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial: maintain current level of financial subsidy and resourcing

Legal: NA

Personnel: maintain current staffing levels

Procurement: NA

Council Strategic Plan:

Specify which Grand Challenge (s) and Mission (s) the proposal supports.

- Increase Opportunity and prosperity for all our citizens (Mission 3 Raise attainment amongst Glasgow's Children and young people)

- Fight the climate emergency in a just transition to a net zero Glasgow (Mission 2 Become a net zero carbon city by 2030)

- Reduce poverty and inequality in our communities. (Mission 2 Meet the learning nd care needs of families before and through school, Mission 3 Improve the Health and wellbeing of our local communities, Mission 4 Support Glasgow to be a city that is active and culturally vibrant)

- Enable staff to deliver essential services in a sustainable, innovative, and efficient way for our communities. (Mission1 Create safe, clean, and thriving neighbourhoods, Mission 2 Run an open well governed council in partnership with all our communities)

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.	Yes • CLPL Provision across outcomes • Inclusion of all young people • Mental health and wellbeing focus
What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?	Positive
Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage?	Yes

	All young people access a subsidised residential experience which they wouldn't necessarily be able to given the cost of the same on the open market with private providers. Engagement in civic responsibility and accountability

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions?	Yes
Please specify:	Theme 1 Communication & Community Empowerment Theme 2 Just and Inclusive Place Theme 4 Health and Wellbeing
Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?	Yes

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:

Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report	No

11 Recommendations

11.1 The Committee is asked to note the update and Education Services' work to support all young people to access and benefit from a high quality and progressive outdoor education experience throughout their journey at school.