

**Glasgow City Council****Education, Skills and Early Years City Policy Committee****Report by Executive Director of Education Services****Contact: Donnie Macleod Tel: 74551****BLAIRVADACH OUTDOOR EDUCATION SERVICE REFORM****Purpose of Report:**

To advise Committee of the plans to deliver a sustainable future for the Blairvadach Services.

Recommendations:

The Committee is asked to consider the contents of the report and ask the Executive Director for further updates on progress.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes No consulted: Yes No **PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:**

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This paper outlines the operating background to the Blairvadach Services and recommends how the service can be reformed to meet future demands.
- 1.2 Through a service restructuring the Centre plans to increase its reach and curricular impact to the benefit of Glasgow's young people. The service will blend its existing high-quality adventurous education programmes and the Learning for Sustainability (LfS) Agenda to become a 'Centre of Excellence'.
- 1.3 This paper sets out plans to deliver service reform but should be cognisant of the previous 10 years of growth in demand for the service. The Centre is currently fully booked term time until the end of the academic year 2022. However, stakeholders are aware that there may be changes to these bookings either as a result of COVID 19 or service reform. The centre will continue to contribute to the delivery of the broad general education and closing the attainment gap.

2. BACKGROUND AND CURRENT SERVICE DELIVERY

- 2.1 Blairvadach Outdoor Education Centre operates two core Education Services resources:
 - A residential base 45 minutes from Glasgow in Rhu, next to the Gareloch, the Centre offers a range of water and land based outdoor education programmes that support the development of people as successful learners.
 - 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.
- 2.2 In 2021/22 the service will launch a new collaborative outdoor education service alongside Psychological Services. Building on our recent, very successful work with accommodated young people and school nurture units, we have secured funding to provide two term time instructors to deliver a therapeutic programme of outdoor education to care experienced young people.
- 2.3 In addition, the Centre delivers outdoor learning guidance and training to teachers and support staff.
- 2.4 The facilities are primarily for the benefit of Glasgow's school age pupils, however, within its existing capacity during non-term time, the Residential Centre can offer private courses, corporate development and conference-based facilities to external clients

3. THE EVOLUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY BY BLAIRVADACH

- 3.1 To understand the challenges, we must first gain an overview of the service evolution over the past 6 years.
- 3.2 Residential Centre

3.2.1 For the past six years we have seen a holistic effort to maximise access to the resources for Glasgow School pupils with a focus on inclusion. This has been achieved by increasing occupancy seven days per week without compromising the 'Gold Standard' of programmes Blairvadach is nationally recognised as delivering.

3.2.2 Figure 1 shows how year on year increasing numbers of Glasgow young people have been accessing the service.

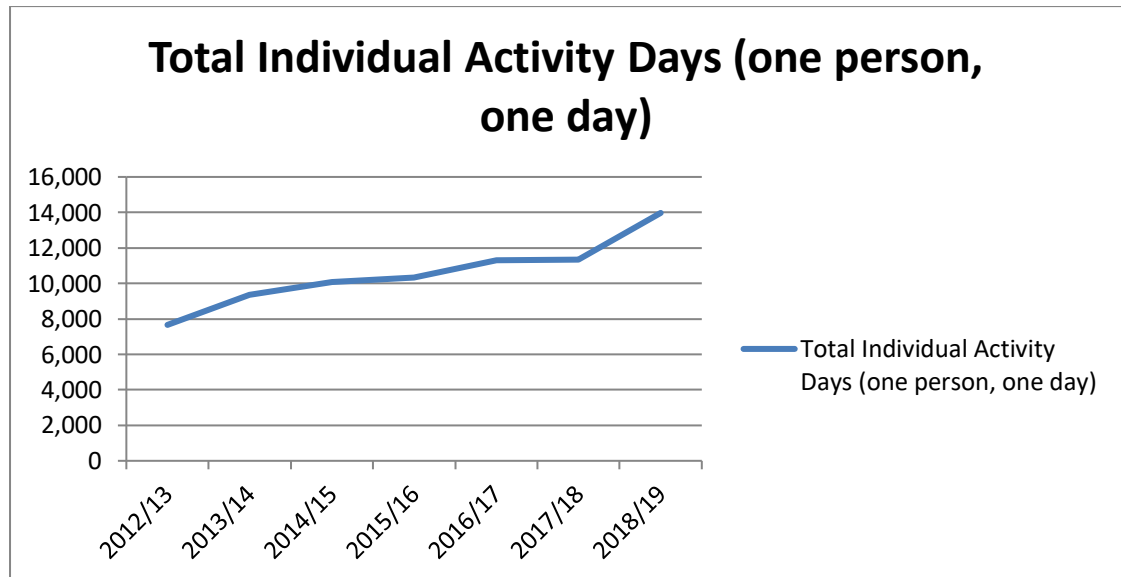


Figure 1 Total Individual Activity Days

3.3 The administration and management levels at the Centre have remained the same. The team was designed to manage a single site operation with reduced mid-week operations and a handful of operational weekends. The service now operates across multiple locations with optimised occupancy seven days per week. In addition, the Centre contributes to the wider outdoor learning agenda within the city through, training, advice and developing resources.

3.4 The instructional team has been modified with a balance of full and part time to service the flexibility in demand.

3.5 Blairvadach operates a sliding scale of subsidy for Glasgow's young people for mid-week courses, all other provision is charged at cost recovery rates.

3.6 Blairvadach Residential Centre products

- Residential Outdoor Education Programme – Primary, Secondary and ASL.
- Supported Study Weekends.
- Outdoor Activity Weekends.
- Single Day Outdoor Education Experience- All sectors.
- Teacher Outdoor Learning professional learning.

- National proficiency awards in paddlesports, sailing, climbing and mountain biking.

3.7 Glasgow City Council's Improvement Challenge lays out five key aspects to the holistic approach the Council is taking to improve attainment for all young people. One of these five key aspects is "Improving children's health and wellbeing through nurturing approaches and increased participation in physical activity and sport". A Blairvadach residential meets that facet of the improvement challenge for every single child who attends. There is no doubt that the outdoor sports and activities which the children take part in during their trip are a crucial instigator for personal development. When combined with the myriad of health and wellbeing outcomes met simply by staying away from home in the nurturing environment of the Residential Centre, those effects multiply and are magnified. The positive effects of outdoor education are well documented, especially for children from low-income families who might otherwise not be able to take part in these types of activities.

4. UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SERVICE

4.1 Blairvadach's service is highly regarded nationally as a leader of provision. The following breakdown of these characteristics explains what sets the service apart from our competition and why it is so highly valued by stakeholders.

4.2 Inclusion

- Because Blairvadach is owned and funded by Glasgow City Council's Education Service, it provides access to internationally recognised, high-quality, residential Outdoor Education for all young people regardless of their economic background.
- Access to high-quality, residential Outdoor Education reduces the attainment gap for all young people and is especially impactful on those who have had Adverse Childhood Experiences.
- Blairvadach provides quality outdoor clothing and equipment for all participants.
- Blairvadach provides healthy food, comfortable accommodation and laundry facilities for all participants.
- Blairvadach provides opportunities to participate in outdoor education experiences which are often inaccessible to the 60% of Glasgow's pupil's in SIMD 1 & 2 (20% most deprived).

4.3 Unique location

- After a short journey, Glasgow's young people can experience living, adventuring and learning in Scotland's unique and beautiful landscape.
- Waterfront location with its own access to the Gare Loch and therefore the Clyde estuary.

- Adjacent to the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park.
- Easy access to the hills.
- On the Highland Boundary Fault.

4.4 Reputation

- Having serviced the Glasgow people for decades, Blairvadach is trusted by literally generations of Glaswegians.
- Blairvadach has an impeccable safety record.
- Blairvadach is known to provide a nurturing, safe and caring environment for all young people.

4.5 Staff

- Staff have decades of experience of delivering adventurous, outdoor education for young people.
- All staff have a broad range of outdoor qualifications which enables each instructor to work with their own group throughout the duration of the course. This continuity is extremely important for establishing relationships and maximising successful outcomes and learning.
- As well as most staff having Outdoor Education degrees, there are staff with degrees in teaching, zoology, psychology and other specialisms.
- Amongst the staff there are people who hold the highest levels of outdoor qualifications providing in-house, expert advice, safety management and the ability to deliver Outdoor Education in basic through to advanced environments.

5. PINKSTON BASIN CITY CENTRE BASE

- 5.1 This facility has been operating since 2015. The educational products on offer include field studies, bush craft and paddlesports. The facility provides an opportunity for schools to access outdoor education within the school day. This model has proved to be extremely popular as an accessible addition. Figure 2 shows how the reach of the Pinkston service has grown since opening.

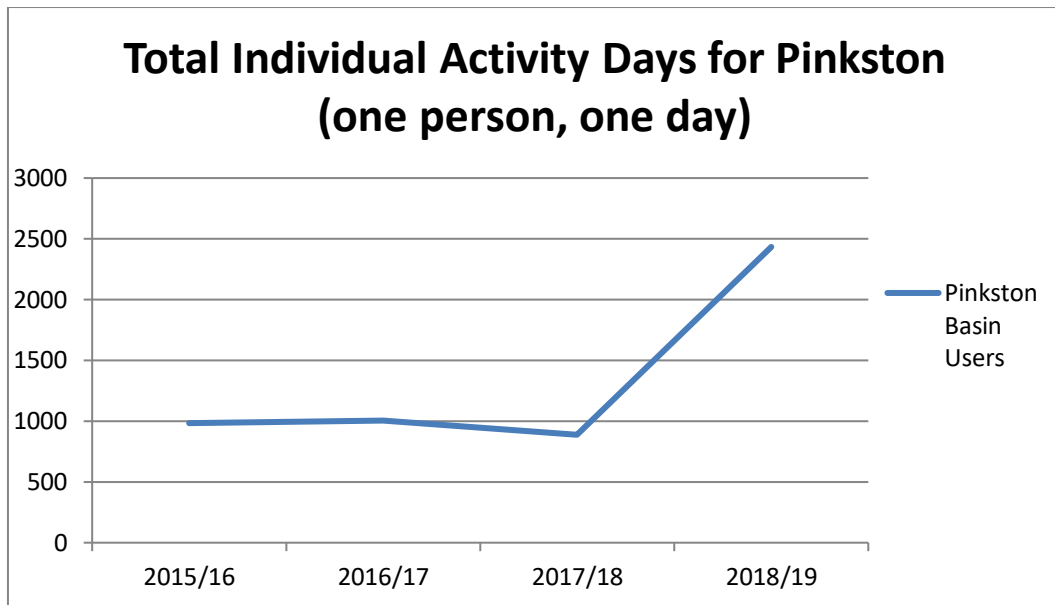


Figure 2: Total Activity Days at Pinkston Basin

5.2 This Centre is managed and administered remotely from the Blairvadach Residential Centre. The instructional roles at the site have evolved through the deployment of sessional instructors. However, there is a core of instructors working term time from this base who facilitate the majority of the service. All service delivery at the Pinkston Basin is cost recoverable through the fees paid by participants / schools and grants.

5.3 Blairvadach Pinkston Centre Products

- John Muir Award – 4-day course
- Outdoor Learning Courses for Teachers and Practitioners
- Paddlesports Proficiency - 4 session course

5.4 Although the residential services and inner-city services are delivered by the same employee team, for the purposes of this paper the services have been split to enable clear recommendations. The services are not mutually exclusive and provide different experiences and outcomes. One does not substitute the other.

5.5 In addition to delivering educational outcomes for young people and supporting wider outdoor learning capacity within the city the Centre feeds directly into [Glasgow's Cycling Strategy 2016-2025](#) and more recently features in the [Glasgow City Extreme Sports Destination guide](#).

5.6 It is assumed for the purposes of this paper that following the COVID pandemic provision of the Blairvadach services will resume to normal occupancy levels.

6 BLAIRVADACH DELIVERY DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC

6.1 When COVID lockdown was introduced in March 2020, many of Blairvadach's school bookings were cancelled. However, the Centre recognised the possibilities for outdoor learning to play a strong role in the education recovery programme.

6.2 Its existing resources were quickly repurposed to:

- Deliver outdoor learning in the 'Hub Schools' to the children of key workers and most vulnerable.
- Develop an online outdoor learning programme which was used as a home learning resource: <https://www.blairvadach.org.uk/Pages/View/22> .
- Create orienteering maps for all school grounds in Glasgow City Council and a resource pack for teachers: <https://www.blairvadach.org.uk/Pages/View/23> These types of resources have proved invaluable for teachers who are being encouraged to take their learning outdoors whenever possible.
- Create an online course to assist teachers who were new to taking their learning outdoors. This course online module gave practical advice for taking the curriculum outdoors and how to operate in a COVID safe way. A video of this course can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/q2gtKmwzqPc>.
- Work in partnership with Glasgow City Council Social Work to support young people in the care system. This facilitated getting young people out of their normal environment, to work on a Residential Personal and Social Development Programme using different outdoor activities as the vehicle. This programme proved hugely successful for the mental wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable young people in society.
- Develop an alternative to residential experiences. Each school that was booked now experiences a week-long blended outdoor education experience based in their school, local park and two days at the Outdoor Education Centre. This progressive course focuses on resilience, teamwork and behaviour as part of GCCs Education Recovery Programme.
- Create a '30 Day Outdoor Learning Challenge'. This resource is aimed at Glasgow Schools but is open to all online. Each day, for 30 days a new curriculum based outdoor learning challenge was released alongside a resource card and video. Hundreds of schools have accessed the resource to enhance the in-school learning. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ediRQiKsc_8
- Embed instructors in schools to assist with taking learning outdoors, in the playground and local parks.
- The City Centre facilities has continued to operate through small adjustments to the programme structure. Schools have found this resource invaluable when many other schools education trips could not go ahead.
- Embed instructors into Enhanced Nurture Units in schools to introduce some of the least engaged young people to an alternative educational programme.

6.3 The demand for the service remains extremely high (even in the COVID crisis) and each facility is fully booked until June 2022. The Centre has continued to

operate throughout the COVID 19 crisis within the national scientific guidance to support the young people of Glasgow.

- 6.4 The overall impact of the service during 2020/2021 can be viewed in our [Impact Report](#).

7. CHALLENGES FOR THE SERVICE

- 7.1 Glasgow continues to be a leading light nationally for its focus and recognition of the importance of Outdoor Learning. The recent pandemic has further shone a positive light on this commitment. The approach to inclusive educational opportunities should continue to be celebrated within the authority. However, the Blairvadach service is continuously under threat of closure. This constant uncertainty creates a challenging environment for the individuals employed but also for wider stakeholders who rely on the service.
- 7.2 Blairvadach Outdoor Education Centre has been part of the DNA of Glasgow's Education Landscape for nearly 50 years. Adventurous education in Scotland's special rural places is unique in a young person's journey through school in that these learning experiences are beyond the competence and capability of schools alone.
- 7.3 Blairvadach Residential Centre has been well maintained over the past 45 years and overall is serviceable. There are a few areas such as the windows, original accommodation corridors and a possible extension to the accommodation which would require larger investment.

8. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

- 8.1 As part of the service review, stakeholders were consulted on what they would like the service to provide going forward.

Consultation Process

There were three main consultation techniques used to gather data. Due to COVID 19 restrictions these were limited to digital information sharing and gathering:

- Online forums and webinars
- Digital Surveys
- Creation and sharing of the digital consultation document to inform webinars and wider groups. [Download Document Here](#)

The reach of the stakeholder consultation which has informed all aspects of the service review included the Blairvadach team; Facilities Management Team; Glasgow School Pupils; Parents and Carers; Teachers and other stakeholders.

8.2 The various consultation processes have informed all aspects of this paper. The process highlighted 4 main areas which will deliver the transformation package.

- Remit of the Centre and target audience
- Governance of the Centre
- Operational Structure
 - Course structure and price
 - Employee structure
- Learning for Sustainability Centre of Excellence

8.3 Consultation Outcome - Data Analysis

8.3.1 The main stakeholder feedback highlighted the desire for the service to continue with residential experiences as the focus and that inclusion should remain a high priority.

8.4 Remit of the Centre

8.4.1 Overall, the stakeholder consultation favoured a service that focuses on increasing occupancy for Primary 7 pupils. However, this outcome is weighted by the number of primary school teachers and pupils that took part in the consultation process.

8.5 Delivering a service that focuses on provision for Glasgow Citizens was the second most popular choice and the 'full cost recovery' options was the least favourite. This reflects the political priority of the City's demographic.

8.6 Blairvadach's results, feedback and evidence documented in its annual impact reports show that the Blairvadach experiences does have an immediate, positive, and long-lasting impact on the young people we work with. Only by the unique way that the service is funded can the service reach such a wide-ranging cross section of the Glasgow community. The service demonstrates through its residential and outreach provision that where positive, planned and engaging learning opportunities are presented, young people grow in confidence, belief and attainment and become enthusiastic learners. Evidence of this impact can be seen in our impact reports:

1. [2019 / 2020 Impact Report](#)
2. [2020 / 2021 C19 Recovery Impact Report](#)

8.7 Learning for Sustainability Centre of Excellence (LfS)

8.7.1 All responses to the consultation were in favour of moving the facility towards being a Centre of Excellence for LfS. This enthusiasm came with minor concern of the potential loss of the 'adventurous' aspect of the programme. All participants highlighted this option as added value to the current experience and greater curricular outcomes.

8.8 Operational Structures

8.8.1 The most popular choice for length of course is to remain with current model of Monday – Friday and Friday – Sunday residential visits. The alternative options which included splitting each week into two 4-day residential experiences was not popular. The Blairvadach employee team highlighted a number of operational efficiencies through the consultation process. The level of implementation of these operational efficiencies will be determined by the outcome of this paper, i.e. some ideas for operation will not be relevant if a new structure is adopted.

9. SERVICE TRANSFORMATION RECCOMENDATIONS

9.1 Remit of the Centre

The consultation process has demonstrated that stakeholders would like to see increased access to the facility to further benefit Glasgow's young people. In addition, the Centre should look to further integrate its products with the Learning for Sustainability agenda.

9.2 To deliver this remit, the Centre will offer the follow suite of Education Programmes:

- Schools **EcoAdventure** Residential.
- Secondary Skills Proficiency Residential.
- Supported Study Weekends.
- Glasgow Schools Holiday Programmes.
- A small number of private courses when the Centre is not occupied by Glasgow Citizens.

9.3 Blairvadach will continue to deliver National Governing Body Awards. These will be mainly to support the secondary experiences and small number of private groups.

9.4 Review of course structure and content

Once the operating capacity, pricing and staffing structure are agreed the content of each educational programme can be reviewed. Specifically, the Blairvadach Team feedback in April highlighted several initiatives which should be included in such programmes:

- Preloading residential visits with resources for schools to utilise. This will better prepare the young people for the visit and deliver added value to the experience. This should be achieved through integration with the new digital estate.
- Post visit resources for schools to utilise. This will enable outcomes delivered during the residential experience to be reinforced back at school.
- Gather direct pupil feedback.

- Further reinforce the curricular links in a format that enables teachers to use them as learning evidence.
- Seek specialist partner organisations to compliment the education programmes. E.g. Glasgow Eco Trust to support the EcoAdventure programmes.

9.5 Centre Occupancy - The length of the residential course is crucial to the young person's experience. The correct balance must be struck between price, outcomes and inclusion. The consultation process showed us that young people and teachers preferred a 5-day residential experience over a 2-day weekend. The option of a 4-day programme was not a popular stakeholder choice.

9.6 To deliver a balance of courses and continue to service all school sectors the Blairvadach term time calendar will be populated as follows:

- 37 weeks of 5-day Schools EcoAdventure Residential Monday – Friday
- 11 Supported Study Weekends Friday – Sunday
- 24 Allocated Weekends of Schools EcoAdventure Residential Friday - Sunday

School holidays will be populated with:

- 3 weeks of Gold DofE Adventure Residential
- 3 Weeks of Primary Summer Camp
- 4 Weeks of Social Work Residential Unit Provision
- 4 Weekends of Social Work Residential Unit Provision
- 7 Weekends of Private Bookings

Weekends will be allocated to schools through the established distribution process. This will deliver more efficient use of resources, ensure weekends are booked and guarantee income. The allocation process, although not furnishing every school with the longer 5 day programme each year, will deliver increased occupancy for Glasgow pupils on a wider range of courses. Table 3 shows an annual increase of 2479 activity days. This increase would enable most schools who currently apply each year to be placed.

	2018/2019 Occupancy	New Model Occupancy	% Difference
Pinkston	2433	2975	22
Residential	11119	13056	17
Total	13552	16031	18

Table 3 Total predicted occupancy

Study weekends will operate with a reduced number of instructors compared to core activity weekends.

10. POLICY AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Resource Implications:

<i>Financial:</i>	<i>within current funding arrangements</i>
<i>Legal:</i>	<i>none</i>
<i>Personnel:</i>	<i>slight reduction in number of personnel due to restructuring</i>
<i>Procurement:</i>	<i>none</i>

Council Strategic Plan: Excellent and Inclusive Education

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

<i>Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.</i>	Excellent and Inclusive Education 22 Yes, outcome 9 – barriers to participation in learning are reduced.
<i>What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?</i>	positive impact The report considers equality characteristics in sections 7, 8 and 9.
<i>Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.</i>	Subsidised rate continues for all Glasgow children and young people

Climate Impacts:

<i>Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:</i>	Yes move to greater sustainability
<i>What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?</i>	Educates children and young people with a greater focus on LFS.

Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target? yes

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts: none

11 Recommendations

11.1 The Committee is asked to consider the contents of the report and ask the Executive Director for further updates on progress.