



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP
Chief Secretary to the Treasury
HM Treasury
The Correspondence & Enquiry unit
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

20 October 2020

Dear Minister,

Support for the outdoor education sector

In light of the latest changes to the Covid-19 measures and your answer during your statement on 13 October 2020 on the floor of the House, on economic support available to individuals and businesses in areas of the country subject to additional public health restrictions, I am writing to you to consider the challenges faced by the outdoor education sector.

Wealden is lucky to have fantastic outdoor education centres, who work with thousands of children and young people from all backgrounds, helping them to enhance their potential and develop new skills. However, they are at risk of imminent closure.

Our local centres: Bowles Rocks, Hindleap Warren and Bewl Water Outdoor Centre, who host residential and non-residential visits for children from Wealden, London, and all across the South East have all written to me expressing their grave concern about their future.

Outdoor educational experiences provide a vital contribution to personal development and the physical and mental health of young individuals. Children have been missing rounded learning experiences during lockdown and an opportunity to visit outdoor learning centres is more important now than ever.

Bowles Rocks, Hindleap Warren and Bewl Water Outdoor Centre are Covid-safe and fully equipped to accommodate for class bubbles. However, the Department for Education is currently advising against residential and non-residential domestic trips for children, despite the Government allowing outdoor activities and organised sport in areas of Medium Covid alert level. This is having a profound financial impact on the sector and it removes a vitally important element of children's education.

I have previously written to the Secretary of State for Education and I am awaiting his response. I would like to encourage you to support me in urging the Department for Education to reconsider its position and open up outdoor education experiences.

We must prevent the lasting damage to the sector as it may result in irreversible closure of outdoor education centres and deny these valuable experiences to children in the future. Your support would be most welcomed by the most affected businesses in Wealden, as well as by children and educators in Wealden, London and the South East.

I look forward to hearing from you further on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "N Ghani".

Nusrat Ghani MP