
To: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)

Date: 11th September 2025

Subject: An Overview of Coventry Outdoor Education Service (Coventry Outdoors)

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the Coventry Outdoor Education Service (Coventry Outdoors) including future developments and plans for celebrating 60 years of Dol Y Moch
- 1.2 The note will cover current delivery, strategic priorities, participation, financial position, and to present future development plans aligned with the One Coventry Plan including reducing health inequalities across the city and recommendations for the service's continued growth and sustainability.
- 1.3 The Coventry Outdoors Education Strategy 2025 – 2027 and 2025/26 Brochure is included at Appendix A and B.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) are recommended to:
 - 1) Consider the information provided to comment and/or raise questions
 - 2) Identify any recommendations for the appropriate Cabinet Member
 - 3) Identify any areas for further scrutiny to be added to the work programme

3 Information and Background

- 3.1 Coventry Outdoors, delivers a diverse programme of educational and personal development experiences for children, young people, and adults through outdoor learning and activity. The service currently operates at Coombe Abbey Country Park and the outdoor residential centre, Plas Dol-y-Moch, is in North Wales (Eryri National Park).
- 3.2 From 1966 – 2021 Coventry has operated an Outdoor Education service comprising Plas Dol-y-Moch, and in more recent years an Educational Visits Advice and Guidance service, and some Duke of Edinburgh provision.
- 3.3 Coventry's outdoor education has traditionally centred on Plas Dol-y-Moch. Whilst these are highly valued experiences this one-off experience approach does not

promote children's access to sustained and broader outdoor learning. The concern is that this disproportionately impacts disadvantaged children who may already face significant barriers to accessing green space.

- 3.4 In 2021, following consultation with schools and partners, the City Council committed to expanding the service. This led to the launch of the In-City Outdoor Education Service at Coombe, aimed at providing more children and young people regular local access to high-quality outdoor learning with the aim of providing wide-ranging benefits for health, wellbeing, and education. There is also an outreach service into schools.
- 3.5 Coventry Outdoors operates as a traded hybrid model of educational provision and commercial delivery to ensure a financially viable service meeting the City Council's expectation that traded services operate on a full cost recovery basis.
- 3.6 There are five key areas of focus within the service:
 - a) Enhancing Educational and Therapeutic Provision for Children and Young People through Outdoor Education. The service supports schools (including special educational needs & disability) in delivery of provision which focus on core curriculum, physical health, mental wellbeing, social development, and employability skills.
 - b) Educational Visits Advice and Guidance Service. The service provides professional high-quality advice, guidance and support for schools and establishments in managing educational visits and activities, to assist delivering outdoor education, learning and adventure.
 - c) Professional Development for Adults. The service provides Continuous Professional Development (CPD), training, and apprenticeship courses for educators and practitioners to embed outdoor education and activities within their curriculum intent or general practice.
 - d) Commercial strand activity. Commercial services such as group activities, expeditions, corporate packages, holiday programmes, and events to generate revenue while promoting outdoor engagement and education.
 - e) Sustainability Awareness and Development. The service is leading on the Coventry Green Awards Scheme for schools including integrated sustainability principles throughout the service and into outdoor education programmes, emphasising climate change education, conservation, and eco-friendly practices. In line with the One Coventry Plan and the City Council's Green Skills Roadmap.
- 3.7 The Coventry Outdoors strategy aims to enhance accessibility and engagement through the implementation of a sustainable hub-and-spoke model, connecting a central outdoor education, training, and wellbeing hub to smaller satellite locations across the city.
- 3.8 Coventry Outdoors contributes directly to several core strategies and statutory responsibilities detailed below:
 - a) The One Coventry Plan – particularly around health, inclusion, education, and climate action.

- b) The city's Skills Strategy (2022–2030) - through raising aspirations and creating progression pathways, promoting inclusive access, building green skills and sustainability awareness and enhancing skills for life and employment.
- c) Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy – by expanding meaningful access to green space.
- d) Coventry Alternative Provision Strategy – through delivery of innovative, accredited outdoor education for vulnerable learners.
- e) Coventry Climate Change Strategy – embedding sustainability into all aspects of delivery and promoting green skills and environmental awareness.

4 Participation & Reach

- 4.1 In the 2024/25 academic year 8,665 children and young people engaged with Coventry Outdoors. Of which 3,036 attended residential experiences at Plas Dol-y-Moch, and 5,629 engaged with In City provisions. 43% of those accessing the service are White British, 5% mixed heritage, 13% Asian, 11% Black/African/Caribbean, and 28% other or unknown. Further detail on participation and reach is included below:
- a) Of the bookings at Plas Dol-y-Moch 95% are adventure/personal development and 5% field study.
 - b) 129 children and young people at risk of Permanent Exclusion (PEX) or school avoidance were supported through therapeutic and Social Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH)-specific programmes.
 - c) 700 children and young people participated in the Holiday & Food Programme (HAF) and wider family holiday activities.
 - d) 339 adults participated in continuing professional development (CPD), accredited training and apprenticeships. There are currently 75 apprentices on a course or going through their end-point assessment.
 - e) 92 schools subscribe to the Educational Visits Advice and Guidance service level agreement.

5 Finance

- 5.1 The service is fully funded from traded income and grant. The total income received per annum is circa £1.8 million and this covers the full cost of the service including overheads. This has increased from circa £1.4 million in 2022/23, primarily because of the in-city expansion including growth of apprenticeship programmes.

6 Potential Future Developments

Plas Dol-y-Moch

- 6.1 A detailed design brief has been produced for required renovations of the main house, including introducing en-suite staff accommodation, improved student living spaces, and a reconfigured internal layout to better support residential outdoor learning and flexible group bookings.
- 6.2 In addition, a draft concept has been developed for a new multi-purpose external building (approx. 100sqm) to enable dedicated use of the current dining area by

relocating shared functions. The proposed space would also include additional staff accommodation to further increase operational flexibility.

- 6.3 Plas Dol-y-Moch has significant site development constraints including location within a national park, registration as a Grade II listed building with historic and architectural significance, flood risk identified through topography surveys limiting viable development locations.
- 6.4 Once the initial feasibility has concluded, a full business case including financial implications will be developed. There is not specific capital funding available, so any proposals will be subject to affordability and political approval in line with the constitution.

In-City

- 6.5 To contribute to the delivery of a strategic Hub and Spoke delivery approach it is an ambition to develop a rural sustainable community hub development located within the city. This would be designed as a specialist outdoor education, activity and training facility with a focus on education, green skills and health & wellbeing.
- 6.6 This initiative would require a hybrid approach to provision and commercialisation and would need to be underpinned by a self-sustaining commercial business model. Once appropriate land is identified a full business case including financial implications will be developed. There is not specific capital funding available, so any proposals will be subject to affordability and political approval in line with the constitution.

Plas Dol-y-Moch 60th Anniversary Celebrations

- 6.7 2026 will mark the 60th year of Coventry's ownership and operation of Plas Dol-y-Moch, an important milestone for the city and its residents. The anniversary provides an opportunity not only to celebrate the unique contribution the centre has made to generations of Coventry children and families but also to reaffirm its role in shaping the city's future through outdoor education and access to green space.
- 6.8 The celebrations will focus on three distinctive strands:
 - a) Celebrating the Past - Recognising the history and legacy of Plas Dol-y-Moch since 1966, highlighting the thousands of children, young people, and families whose lives have been positively influenced by the centre. This will include capturing and sharing stories, photographs, and testimonies from alumni, schools, and staff to illustrate the centre's enduring impact on Coventry's cultural and educational identity.
 - b) Celebrating the Present - Showcasing the current breadth of provision delivered by Coventry Outdoors at Plas Dol-y-Moch and across the city. This includes residential outdoor learning, therapeutic and SEMH programmes, educational visits, and professional development opportunities. Celebrations will highlight the service's role in tackling health inequalities, promoting inclusion, and embedding outdoor education into the daily lives of Coventry's children and young people.
 - c) Celebrating the Future - Using the anniversary to look forward and engage schools, partners, and communities in shaping the next phase of Coventry Outdoors. This will emphasise opportunities to expand access to outdoor education, ensure long-term sustainability of the service, and align with citywide

ambitions for health, skills, climate action, and green infrastructure. A key focus will be embedding outdoor activity further into the lives of Coventry residents and ensuring equitable access to green spaces for all communities.

- 6.9 The 60th anniversary year will therefore act as a celebratory milestone and a strategic platform—strengthening Coventry’s commitment to outdoor learning, inspiring civic pride, and creating momentum for future development and potential investment.

7 Health Inequalities Impact

7.1 Coventry Outdoors contributes to reducing health disparities across the city by:

- a) Improving Access to Green Space and Nature: providing access to the outdoor environment to those with limited access to green space, addressing historic green infrastructure inequalities.
- b) Promoting Mental Wellbeing: Offering structured, therapeutic programmes that support emotional regulation, resilience, and wellbeing, particularly for children and young people with SEMH needs.
- c) Increasing Physical Activity: Facilitating outdoor movement and engagement that supports healthier lifestyles and obesity prevention.
- d) Supporting Social Mobility: Providing accessible, inclusive programming for disadvantaged learners, including those with SEND, Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility, and in or on the edge of care.
- e) Upskilling the Workforce: Delivering apprenticeships, accredited training and CPD

Appendix A: The Coventry Outdoors Education Strategy 2025 – 2027

Appendix B: 2025/26 Brochure [coventry-outdoors-full-brochure](#)

Name of Author: Faye Parklen

Job Title: Head of Education Entitlement & Enrichment Services

Organisation: Coventry City Council

Contact details: Faye.Parklen@Coventry.gov.uk