

SOEC Field Studies Programmes

Examples at Belmont Centre

Belmont Centre is ideally located for intensive, Geography field studies trips. Whether it's a study on sand dune succession or fluvial processes from source to mouth, we can help get you there. Our outdoor tutors are qualified to guide you into remote areas, and many locations are just an hour from the Centre including:

- **River studies** – Glen Clova and Glen Shee
- **Glacial formations** – Corrie Fee National Nature Reserve
- **Sand dune succession** – Tentsmuir Forest
- **Soil profiles** – Belmont centre and local areas
- **Renewable energies** – Drumderg wind farm and nearby proposed build location
- **National Park** – and the tensions between conservation and recreation



1. Map showing some of the locations and related subjects near Belmont (A)

Examples for Geography Field Trips from Belmont

On arrival at Belmont Centre...

SOEC Tutors will introduce you to your accommodation and give a quick site tour with some team building activities to ensure everyone is contributing effectively. Before lunch at 12.30pm, there will be time to engage with pupils to discuss their aims, the opportunities in the days ahead, and requirements when operating in the field.

Drumderg Wind Farm and Proposed Windfarm Site at Backwater Reservoir:

Your first day can include a quick trip (30 minutes) to the Drumderg windfarm. SOEC has access approval to tour the site, to get students close to the turbines to experience them, hear them and see them in the landscape.

Another short drive takes the team to the location of a proposed wind farm next to the Backwater Reservoir. There is an opportunity to see the landscape prior to the turbines being put into place and gives a good comparison to the earlier visit to Drumderg. While energy is not derived from the reservoir, it is a significant landscape feature and can stimulate discussion about Scotland's contentious story of the development of hydro power as a comparison.

Students will be given facts and figures and information is available at both sites for later use in the evening session. The evening of this day might culminate in a structured debate where the groups would be split into two groups and put forward arguments for or against the building of the Backwater wind farm.



2. Drumderg Wind Farm and Proposed Wind Farm at Backwater Reservoir

Expedition to Corrie Fee, Glen Clova

Corrie Fee is described by the Scottish National Nature Reserves as ***“one of the best examples of a glacial corrie in the British Isles.”*** It includes a magnificent natural amphitheatre of cliffs, amazing U-shaped valleys and an abundance of the glacial features.



3. Two photos of Corrie Fee, showing glacial features and river meandering from steep terrain into forest areas flowing to the main valley section.

“Like a giant stone armchair, Corrie Fee is a wild amphitheatre of rocky landscape sculpted by the power of ice and water. The area is now a haven for the plants, birds and animals that are equipped to cope with the challenges of this harsh mountain environment. If you're lucky you might spot a golden eagle soaring overhead and in the future we hope you might hear the distinctive plop of the secretive water vole, as it drops back into the burn.” <http://www.nnr-scotland.org.uk/corrie-fee/>

As well as a chance to explore the beauty of this area, it also provide excellent opportunities to get close to the river which runs from its source, high up between Munro’s, down through varied terrain giving ample places for studying its characteristics and features following it along a large section. This river can then be followed on the drive back to the centre along the valley to see its size and features change as more tributaries connect and landscape changes.

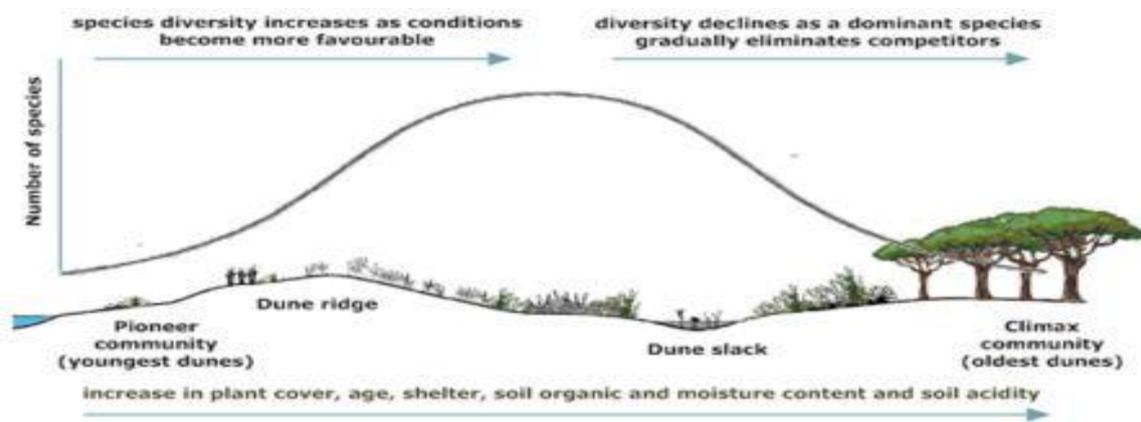
Glacial and River studies can be undertaken in the same day. Field experiments can include flow (using flow meters and timing floating balls for comparison,) volume, measurements of gradient, and sedimentation as part of the ages and stages of rivers. Photographs of features can be taken for later use that evening or at school. In the evening, findings can be collated and discussed in a comprehensive evaluation of the day.

A camp fire in the evening (marshmallows provided) provides a great way to sit back and socialise after a good day on the hill.

Tentsmuir Forest:

A full day expedition to the Tentsmuir Forest, not far from St Andrews is perfect for coastal studies. This is an idyllic spot where seals are regularly seen basking on sand bars and boasts a huge variety of wild flowers, birds and insects. The journey takes about an hour from Belmont Centre.

This beach has fantastic sand dunes and the photo below matches very well with the diagram showing sand dune succession. The morning and some of the afternoon would be spent exploring the area. Studies might include PH sampling, measurements including the use of clinometers, vegetation, ground cover, depth etc. Other coastal processes can be discussed such as long shore drift, and on and off-shore winds. Discussion can introduce the importance of dunes and other features such as sand bars in coastal protection.



4.1: Diagram showing sand dune succession



4.2: Photo of the Tentsmuir beach and forest



Other Opportunities, Trips, Activities and Information

There are many opportunities to expand the programme at Belmont, and to explore other features, landscapes and human activity relevant to the Scottish curriculum. For example:

Tourism – undertake a trip to Glen Shee to examine the impact of the skiing industry. Structures essential to the recreation of many, scar the landscape and lie idle at other times. This affords a great opportunity to tackle complex issues for and against this activity including the economic, social and environmental impact – is this sustainability?

Agriculture and Woodland – onsite and close to Belmont Centre are opportunities to study woodlands, contrasting commercial and natural habitats through flora and fauna studies. Belmont Centre is in the heart of one of Scotland's main agriculture area. From the Macbeth Stone in our grounds, we can start the dialogue about agriculture from prehistoric times when farmers used the stone as a calendar. Close by are various examples of the agro-industrial fruit industry as well as organic producers. Link this to experiments on soils and surveys of flora and fauna.

Outdoor Activities – intersperse your studies with our exciting on-site activities which are relevant to geography. Sharpen up those map reading skills through orienteering. Perhaps enjoy a session of our famous radio rescue activity to build team work for effective contributors and essential skills for the field. Go climbing and abseiling at a local crag, giving the real rock experience. Or go canoeing on local lochs and river to explore islands and the landscape from a different perspective. There are a huge number of walks which can be undertaken around the area including sections of the Cateran Trail. Camping and shelter building are also great options for the development of life skills.

Your Field Studies Programme will include:

- Accommodation and full board including cooked breakfast, evening meal and supper as well as packed lunches for trips from the Centre.
- Classrooms for study, planning and review sessions with projectors, TV, DVD and flipcharts.
- Personal kit such as waterproofs, wellies and rucksacks are available for the students.
- SOEC can provide transport to and from locations whilst at Belmont.
- SOEC Outdoor Tutors who are fully disclosure checked, qualified to take clients into all areas of study and are all first aid trained, carrying first aid kits, group's shelters and a means of calling for aid when out in the field.

There are several geographers among the SOEC staff team to call upon including the CEO, Centre Managers and senior Tutors. We would welcome opportunities to collaborate with teachers to create great Field Studies Programmes. For an informal chat to explore what you want to do, please contact: Dave Spence, Chief Executive on: 01899 221115 or via email at davespence@soec.org.uk

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