

Research has been carried out into the barriers that schools experience when trying to deliver fieldwork\*. This has suggested that the three main challenges schools face are

- the increasing financial cost of fieldwork (and in particular, the cost of transport);
- finding time in a busy school calendar;
- and a lack of confidence or experience in department members planning and delivering fieldwork.

In these three, almost all schools surveyed quoted that the financial cost of fieldwork was their number one barrier to giving their students high quality fieldwork experiences.

There is no single solution to reducing the cost of fieldwork. The following list gives a number of ideas that schools might wish to employ - not all of these ideas will work in all schools, but it is hoped that it may provide schools and teachers with some points for discussion and consideration.

### GENERAL

---

- **Ring-fence part of your department budget** specifically for fieldwork activities. Discuss with senior leaders how this can not only be protected but be maintained in line with rising fieldwork costs (and not the detriment of other areas of the department budget).
- Consider **fieldwork grants** such as the [Frederick Soddy Schools Award](#) to boost the budget you are working with.

### TRANSPORT

---

- **Go local.** Don't forget there are always geographical concepts and processes to explore on your doorstep and within the school grounds - fieldwork doesn't have to be further afield in order to be high quality.
- If possible, **use public transport.** It is likely that you will be able to negotiate cheaper tickets for group travel.
- Create a **contract with a local coach company.** It may be possible to negotiate lower (and frozen) prices if the company knows that you (and other departments in the school) will use them consistently for the next three to five years.
- **Avoid peak season** for coach companies. Ask for quotes for different times of the year and book far in advance if possible to get the best prices.
- Look for **flexibility in your itinerary.** Coach travel can be most expensive when a coach picks you up and then waits for you before taking you back to school, with the coach and driver sitting idle for most of the day. It may be possible to work the itinerary of your day so that travel is only needed for one leg of a journey or for a coach to pick you up from public transport hubs so that overall distances are reduced.
- **Join with other departments.** It may be possible to join your fieldwork day together with another department so that more students are heading to the same site (making it easier to negotiate lower transport costs). A Level biologists could go to the same site as GCSE geographers but do different tasks once they are there. In the same way, two geography departments from neighbouring schools (or a secondary and feeder primary) may be able to share transport costs to visit the same location.

\* 2018 National Fieldwork Survey from FOLSIG on behalf of the Geographical Association.

- **Hire minibuses** (and their drivers) from local schools rather than approaching a coach company. If your school does not have a minibus fleet itself, consider approaching schools close to yours to see if they would be willing to hire you theirs on days when they are known to not be in use.

### COVER

---

- **Run joint fieldwork trips** with another department (such as biology) to minimise the amount of cover required for the amount of fieldwork taking place.
- **Invite recently retired colleagues** back to be an extra member of staff for the day - you might be surprised how many would love for a chance to see their old students and catch up with colleagues.
- **Diversify your team.** Make full use of teaching assistants, student teachers and members of bursarial staff when thinking about your staffing ratio. Many would love to have a day out with students, even if geography is not their subject specialism.

### EQUIPMENT

---

- **Share fieldwork equipment.** Schools in MATs maybe able to have one fieldwork equipment store that is used centrally by all the schools and be 'booked out' when it is needed for fieldwork.
- Consider **hiring fieldwork equipment** from a local university or field studies provider - it may be cheaper than buying new.
- **Make your own** fieldwork equipment. Many pieces of fieldwork equipment such as quadrats, infiltrometers and clinometers can be made from cheap materials from DIY stores or from old packaging.
- **Look for bargains.** As field centres sadly close around the country a surprising amount of fieldwork equipment ends up on eBay or similar sites at heavily reduced prices.

Above all else, remember to be creative, flexible and approach fieldwork planning with a willingness to compromise. Just because something has not been tried before doesn't mean it can't be done. With an open mindset and frank conversations with senior leaders, much more is likely to be achieved.