

The main aim of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar with regard to Education is to provide 'Quality Education in Quality Buildings'

The challenges facing the Comhairle are clear:

- A very challenging financial climate.
- A lot of old school buildings.
- Fewer children.
- Directing funds to improve and modernise school buildings.

The Scottish Government target is to ensure that no less than 90% of children will be educated in good condition schools (condition A and B). Only 51% of primary children in the Western Isles are educated in buildings that are in good condition.

The world into which our young people are going is changing so fast that there is a strong probability that:

- the top ten in-demand jobs in 2010 did not exist in 2004;
- we need to prepare learners for jobs that do not yet exist;
- they will be using technologies that have not been invented; and
- they will have to be solving problems we do not even know are problems yet.

The world is changing – therefore the way we deliver education has to change to keep up. We want to provide our young people with a first class education in buildings that are fit for purpose with good transport arrangements.

- We want to discuss with you how we can best provide these opportunities and experiences.
- We intend to hold a meeting in your area.
- We hope you will come along and contribute to the debate that will shape the future provision of education in our islands.



### Contact details

Morag Munro  
Chairperson  
Education and Children's Services Committee  
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar  
Sandwick Road  
Stornoway  
Isle of Lewis HS1 2BW

07778598311  
mmunro@cne-siar.gov.uk

Malcolm Burr  
Chief Executive  
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar  
Sandwick Road  
Stornoway  
Isle of Lewis HS1 2BW

01851 709500  
m.burr@cne-siar.gov.uk

Joan M Mackinnon  
Director of Education and Children's Services  
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar  
Sandwick Road  
Stornoway  
Isle of Lewis HS1 2BW

01871 709430  
joanmackinnon@cne-siar.gov.uk



## COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

### EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES DEPARTMENT

## Future Strategy for Provision of Education in the Western Isles

Feedback on Community Information  
and Engagement Activity  
conducted in May/June 2009

# THE NEXT STEPS

## Background Information

The Comhairle is currently facing a number of unprecedented challenges. These challenges are centred around the following core issues:

- Increasing ageing population.
- Decreasing population under 18 years.
- Funding for education is directly related to school rolls.
- Harder times ahead as there are likely to be significant public sector spending cuts in future years.

In February 2009, after extensive community consultation the Comhairle concluded that the next phase of the process should involve all parents of children receiving their education in Western Isles schools and members of the wider community, and that they would be invited to engage in discussion about the future strategy for provision of education in the Western Isles.

## The First Engagement

The process began with the distribution of a community information document. The document provided a range of information about factors which affect education provision and included a response sheet which invited feedback. It was issued to all parents (3,000), teaching staff (400), pre-school parents (300), pre-school staff (120), Community Councils and Residents Associations (30), National Bodies (4), Councillors (31). In all, 3,885 copies of the document were distributed. In addition, the information was also posted on the Comhairle web-site and a press release was issued to publicise the process and to encourage participation.

## Responses to the Information Document

The number of responses was very low compared with the wide distribution of the document. Most people acknowledged that the Comhairle is facing financial challenges which include:

- Maintenance of current school buildings.
- Falling school rolls.
- Increasing need to care for the elderly.
- Improving road infrastructure.

The responses received are shown below.

Area	Total	Catchment	Total
Greater Broadbay	9	Sandwickhill	6
		Tong	2
		Unspecified	1
Ness and Westside	4	Bragar	1
		Cross	1
		Lionel	2
Harris	1	Sir E Scott	1
Uist and Barra	35	Paible	1
		Eriskay	33
		Unspecified	1

Some of those responding felt that reducing the number of schools would have a negative effect on communities and that there would be travel implications for pupils. Others felt that there would be benefits for pupils if there were fewer schools. These benefits included better social interaction and better facilities.

Some people were of the opinion that the advantages of having small schools included individual attention, less travelling and closer links in the home community. Others indicated that the advantages of having larger schools included better resources, better facilities and more opportunities for competitive experiences.

## Gaelic Medium Education

The responses regarding Gaelic medium education indicated that:

- They were positive about Gaelic generally.
- There was some support for a dedicated Gaelic School.
- There was some opposition to Gaelic Medium Education.

## The Second Engagement

The Community Engagement Workshops, which took place in June 2009, built on the information gathered earlier. The responses received from the workshops are summarised in the attached sheet.

The table below gives information about attendance.

Location	Total
Greater Broadbay, Town Hall	5
Greater Broadbay, Back	31
Ness and Westside	31
Uig and Lochs	18
Harris	12
Uist	16
Barra	6

Although numbers were low, the discussion in the meetings was good.

There was general recognition that retention of the current school stock was unsustainable. Most participants could see that the level of expenditure on repairing and maintaining education buildings would mean that other Comhairle services such as roads, care of the elderly and economic development services would suffer.

## Patterns of provision

Responses regarding the provision of education included:

- Putting several primaries together in existing buildings.
- Having well thought out transport arrangements.
- Providing a wide and varied choice for pupils in secondary education.