



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR
Education and Children's Services Department

Future strategy for provision of education in the Western Isles
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

NESS AND WESTSIDE – 23 June 2009

THREE WORKSHOPS

1. What are the advantages in keeping the current number of schools?
There was general consensus regarding the benefit to the community, with schools at the heart of the community, contributing to community cohesion, provision of jobs, keeping children within the community and attracting families into the community. Educational benefits identified were: smaller class sizes, more conducive to developing the four capacities of CfE; accessibility of after school activities; more opportunities for selection for competitive events. Fundraising was assessed as more successful with parents more supportive within their own community. Travel distance, stability in status quo, and family and tradition links were also cited, and possible provision of S1-S3 was raised?
2 What are the disadvantages in keeping the current number of schools?
There was agreement that there were financial issues related to resourcing of schools, including specialised teaching staff and equipment, and problems related to the fabric and design of old buildings when there was a need to improve the school estate. Issues of small class sizes, in relation to peer interaction, the lack of 'gifted stream' facilities in sport, arts, science etc and restriction in the implementation of CfE were identified. Keeping the current provision was not considered to be viable if school roll is very small, with P1-7 composites identified as an issue.
3 What would be the advantages in reducing the number of schools?
The potential for financial efficiencies was put forward, allowing available resources including increased provision of specialist equipment to be allocated among remaining schools to enhance their quality, . There would be fewer composite classes and larger class sizes allow for increased range of pupil abilities. It was noted that it is difficult to make link between pre-school and P1 in a P1-3 or P1-7 composite class
4 What would be the disadvantages in reducing the number of schools?
A detrimental effect on the local economy, including the loss of local jobs were identified, including possible detrimental effects on pupils: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer options for pupils excluded from school (Secondary) • Only 1 secondary for parents • Pupils travelling longer distances/longer school day exhausted children • Difficulty getting involved in After School Clubs • Distance for parents collecting sick children
5 What kind of Gaelic medium provision should the Comhairle have?
One of the groups identified as desirable a dedicated Gaelic Medium School P1-S6, locally. Other factors raised were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More clarity in Gaelic education and clear definition of what Gaelic Medium education is within Curriculum for Excellence • More promotion of available facilities • Better Learning support provisions for Gaelic medium pupils.
6 What are the other needs of this area for Comhairle services?
If it's available we want it. Good level of learning support Updating buildings to ensure all schools inclusive. Community learning Youth Services (after school and evening provision) and transport issues associated with this. Youth co-ordinators (LHYCA) Creating a local croileagan based on viable numbers. - Attract families Local employment Care of the elderly Roads Curriculum for Excellence can be taught in S1/S2 New schools not offering what our local S1/2 can offer.

Main Points

Sustainable rural Communities

Gaelic provision for all who desire it

Continuous improvement of attainment and achievement.

Amalgamation of primaries within existing buildings. Savings from new build used to improve and upgrade

Shawbost – Bragar + Barvas

Breascleite – Carloway + Bernera

Lionel – Cross, Airidhantuim

Retention of secondaries and extension to 3rd year for CfE (if not possible under current S1-2), with video conferencing for highly specialised subjects

Specialised Gaelic School on Westside with residential facilities using appropriate Gaelic funding. Freeing up pupil places in other primaries for amalgamation