



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR
Education and Children's Services Department

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

UIST – 24 June 2009

TWO WORKSHOPS

1. What are the advantages in keeping the current number of schools?
There was agreement on the importance of the school as the core of smaller communities, contributing to community spirit/life, and keeping children connected to their communities. The existence of a school in a community was believed to encourage inward migration from families, and kept jobs locally. The health benefits for children in being able to walk or cycle to school, with less travel overall was identified with a consequent beneficial environmental impact.
2 What are the disadvantages in keeping the current number of schools?
It was considered to be less cost-effective to keep the same number of schools, especially in terms of maintenance. Budget mismanagement was cited by one group in the context of maintenance, Small rolls were seen as limiting social interaction and group learning experience, and led to multi-stage composite classes.
3 What would be the advantages in reducing the number of schools?
It was difficult to identify consensus in the conclusions, which were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None • Opposite of Q2 • Shut S1 and 2 provision at Daliburgh and Paible in order to retain Sgoil Eirisgeidh • Small rolls limit social interaction and group learning experience
4 What would be the disadvantages in reducing the number of schools?
This was seen to relate to the response to question 1, where the benefits identified would be lost. There was concern over travel times e.g. an 11 year old travelling for over 1 hour, and excessive travel for primary school children, with negative effects of lack of sleep and concentration. It was also claimed that the receiving school has lower standards.
5 What kind of Gaelic medium provision should the Comhairle have?
Gaelic medium should always be an option, and there should be Gaelic schools where suitable e.g. Carinish.
6 What are the other needs of this area for Comhairle services?
High speed communication – people could work from home Roads but not at expense of education Create Jobs Economic development (sustainable) Affordable housing to encourage inward migration
Main Points
Different needs for different areas – have separate meetings for each cluster areas. Keeping children in their local community/area Not a fair distribution of money throughout Western Isles. Closure always happens in the Southern isles before the North. Money always goes to Lewis before Southern isles. Education before money/budget. Close S1 and 2 to retain Sgoil Eirisgeidh and other small primary schools. Don't make generalisations – each community has different needs and priorities. Where there is demand create Gaelic schools before it's too late and increase Gaelic provision in secondary