



**COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR**  
**Education and Children's Services Department**

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

**GREATER BROADBAY 2 (BACK) – 24 June 2009**

**THREE WORKSHOPS - SUMMARY**

**1. What are the advantages in keeping the current number of schools?**

There was general consensus regarding the impact on the community, with schools helping to keep communities alive by providing a community focus, employment, keeping learning and pupils in the community and attracting people to come to live in the community

Retention provides choice for parents, gives better pupil-teacher ratios, better pastoral care, higher levels of parental involvement, easier travel, including meeting of "Active Schools" objectives as walking/cycling to school is possible, and has benefits in terms of participation in after-school and community activities..

In terms of secondary education, successful secondary education is maintained and there is the benefit of bringing communities together. Inter-school links and competitions were considered to be advantages.

Views were recorded that where schools are operating at capacity they should be maintained and that Population decline projections are projections rather than fact – this may change.

**2 What are the disadvantages in keeping the current number of schools?**

The financial issues related to upkeep of buildings and falling school rolls, and the financial cost to the Comhairle in terms of effect on other services were identified. Delivery of CfE in smaller schools was also cited.

**3 What would be the advantages in reducing the number of schools?**

Reducing financial pressure on the Comhairle, with the possibility of upgrading school estate to provide better facilities if savings re-invested in remaining schools estate, and not used to balance the books.

In terms of the experience of children, better scope for social interaction in larger groups and fewer composite classes were identified.

Views were recorded that each situation treated on merit, that one size did not fit all, and that the quality of education should be at least as good if not better.

**4 What would be the disadvantages in reducing the number of schools?**

The beneficial aspects relating to the community in question 1 would be reversed, with an overall negative impact on the community cited. Additional factors identified:

- greater travel, with a negative impact on healthy lifestyles,
- depopulation,
- implications for teaching staff
- larger classes
- less parental choice
- possibility of Nursery and school not on the same campus
- fewer inter-school links
- less access to after-school activities
- The school would be less accessible.

**5 What kind of Gaelic medium provision should the Comhairle have?**

The consensus was to maintain the status quo, although one of the groups noted a wish for a dedicated Gaelic medium secondary school, centrally located. The groups felt that current provision promotes integration of Gaelic medium and English stream pupils than if there was a dedicated school, and identified a need for appropriate and properly resourced Gaelic medium education provision in pre-school/schools, and review of pupil/teacher ratios in pre-school.

**6 What are the other needs of this area for Comhairle services?**

Roads/transport  
 Care for elderly  
 Economic development and employment  
 Better use of existing resources (street light could be switched off)  
 Pavements – safer footpaths/cycle tracks and maintenance of existing footpaths  
 Better funding for community halls and groups.  
 Better tourism promotion: not realising our potential as an Island group.  
 Youth Worker  
 Young families  
 Housing  
 Recreational facilities  
 Community renewable/sustainable schemes  
 Improvement in 'Home-help'/Carers service

**Main Points**

1. Quality of education should be at least as good if not better – finding balance. The excellent pastoral care which learning within a community affords, allows for many CfE objectives to be achieved, these include – the promotion of active, healthy lifestyles and meets with early level requirements. It also helps to keep communities alive and links into other community activities.
2. Danger of primary and pre school being on a separate campus, and also loss of wider community benefits, and parental choice. No 'one size fits all'. Each situation treated on merit
3. The status quo for Gaelic medium education should remain as the current provision promotes integration for Gaelic medium and English stream pupils. Appropriate and **properly resourced** Gaelic medium education provision in schools.
4. Cost