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Review of Education Provision
at
CARLOWAY SCHOOL
Isle of Lewis

CONSULTATION REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2010

Roinn an Fhoghlaim is Seirbheisean Chloinne

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Review of Education Provision
CONSULTATION REPORT FOR CARLOWAY SCHOOL
Isle of Lewis

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Review of Education Provision at Carloway School, Isle of Lewis Consultation Report

Report by Director of Education and Children's Services

CONSIDER THE PROPOSAL THAT :

- **Education provision at Carloway Primary School be discontinued with effect from 29 June 2012.**
- **That the pupils of Carloway Primary School continue their education at Shawbost School, from 16 August 2012.**
- **That the catchment area of Shawbost School be extended to include the current catchment area of Carloway Primary School.**

BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Comhairle, at its Meeting on 29 April 2010, authorised the Director of Education and Children's Services to proceed to undertake the necessary statutory consultation with parents, staff, pupils and other interested parties affected by the proposal regarding the proposed closure of Carloway School as required by the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 1.2 This decision relates to the implementation of the Strategy for the Future Provision of Education in the Western Isles. The Comhairle is required to provide its statutory services as effectively and efficiently as possible. It is therefore necessary to be strategic in the delivery of education to ensure Best Value. School rolls in the Authority as a whole have been falling year on year for the last thirty years and this, based on population projections, is a continuing trend. This trend has resulted in there being more buildings in the school estate than are considered necessary for the delivery of high quality education.
- 1.3 In order to ensure appropriate investment in education at a time of financial challenges it is necessary that the Comhairle make the most efficient use of its finances and resources. The current level of over-capacity in schools combined with the high maintenance costs and poor condition of many of the school buildings throughout the Western Isles is a significant drain on resources and presents a major obstacle to investment in education and school buildings.
- 1.4 Carloway School is designated as a very remote rural school. In terms of Section 12 of the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010, the Comhairle has given special regard to -
 - any viable alternative to the closure proposal,
 - the likely effect on the local community in consequence of the proposal (if implemented), with reference in particular to
 - (a) the sustainability of the community,
 - (b) the availability of the school's premises and its other facilities for use by the community;

- the likely effect caused by any different travelling arrangements that may be required in consequence of the proposal (if implemented) with reference in particular to
 - (a) the effect caused by such travelling arrangements including (in particular),
 - (i) that on the school's pupils and staff and any other users of the school's facilities,
 - (ii) any environmental impact,
 - (b) the travelling arrangements are those to and from the school of (and for) the school's pupils and staff and any other users of the school's facilities.

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

2.1 The current requirements for consulting on proposed school closures are set out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

- A proposal document was issued as a result of a decision approved by the Comhairle as detailed in Appendix A. A copy of this document was issued free of charge to the consultees as listed in the Proposal Document and was also published on the Comhairle website.
- An advert was placed in local newspapers on 13 May 2010 and the consultation ran thereafter for a period of 34 school days until 30 June 2010.
- A public meeting was held on Wednesday 9 June 2010.
- Pupils and staff were also consulted separately.
- HMle involvement included being sent a copy of the proposal document, their attendance at the public meeting and their visiting the affected schools and meeting with parents, pupils and staff. They also received a copy of all written representations. They then prepared a report on the educational aspects of the proposal (Appendix D)
- This Consultation Report is the Comhairle's response to issues raised during the consultation period including a response to identified inaccuracies in the consultation information.
- This Consultation Report will be published at least three weeks before a final decision is taken by the Comhairle on the proposal.

Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment

2.2 An Initial Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment (Appendix C), in line with statutory legislation, was undertaken in relation to the proposal for the School. There were no discriminatory or detrimental consequences identified to the proposal being implemented. Therefore a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

CONSULTATION MEETINGS

- 3.1 Consultations meetings were held as follows:
- Public meeting at Carloway Primary School on 9 June 2010
 - Meetings with staff at both Carloway and Shawbost Schools were held separately.
 - Meetings with pupils at both Carloway and Shawbost Schools were held separately.

OMISSIONS AND INACCURACIES

- 4.1 Within the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 there is guidance on how errors or omissions should be addressed. With regard to the Carloway School Proposal Document, it was brought to the Comhairle's attention that, in paragraph 8.11 it stated that Shawbost was 4 miles from Carloway when in fact it is 5 miles. This error was not deemed to be material and therefore no further action was taken in relation to this matter.
- 4.2 In paragraph 9.1 of the Proposal Document, Carloway was described as an accessible rural school when in fact it is a very remote rural school. An advertisement to that effect was placed in local newspapers. Attention was drawn to the error at the Public Meeting and the correct definition was given. This error was not deemed to be material and therefore no further action was taken in relation to this matter.

- 4.3 At the public meeting questions were raised about the apparently excessively high cost of transport at Carloway School. The formula for the bus journey is based on a combination of location and numbers travelling on routes. These figures were calculated based on a historical formula. Following the meeting this formula has been revised to reflect the current position. The error was not deemed to be material and therefore no further action was taken in relation to the matter.

REPRESENTATIONS

- 5.1 The written representations received during the consultation period are detailed below.

Representations from:	Number
• Community Petition with 139 signatures	1
• Individual written representations (4 letter with 2 or more signatures)	12
• Parent Council	1
• Staff Professional Associations	2
• Bòrd na Gàidhlig	1
• NHS Western Isles	1
• Fire Service	1
• Alasdair Allan, MSP	1
TOTAL:	20

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS AND COMHAIRLE RESPONSES

- 6.1 This section details the relevant points raised at public meetings and in the written submissions. A full transcript of the public meeting is included as Appendix B. A copy of all written representations will be published as part of the Report to Comhairle Members.
- 6.2 The responses to the issues raised are detailed below.

DEPOPULATION
<p>ISSUE: The closure of Carloway School could contribute to further depopulation. “How can we keep, let alone attract people into the area with no services to offer them”.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over a period of 30 years with significantly more schools than we currently have, there has been an annual decline in the pupil population and there is no evidence within the Western Isles, that having a school in a community increases inward migration • The decline in population is not always greater in communities where schools have already closed. In fact, in some communities, the population has increased in spite of the closure of the local school. • With the improved road infrastructure in the islands, there is evidence that people's choice of where to live may be determined by factors, other than the presence of a school.
<p>ISSUE: Should we not be concentrating on filling rural schools, not closing them? How do you propose to do this, repopulate an area where you are taking away services?</p> <p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of our schools are designated very remote rural schools. Our strategy is focused on sustaining and strengthening schools in very remote rural locations. • The Outer Hebrides Migration Study 2008, identified key factors of sustainable communities which included sustainable employment, private sector led economic diversity, housing provision, self determination and clean energy. It is development in these areas that sustains local communities. • In light of issues raised at the consultation regarding migration and community viability a European Social Fund application supporting community regeneration and economic development, targeting youth and young people, has been developed and is currently being considered at stage 2.

ISSUE: The Scottish Executive's document Safeguarding our Rural Schools 2008 Section 1.19 states that "maintaining the provision of accessible school and nursery education in small rural communities can make a significant contribution to regeneration efforts and to long term sustainability of local communities".

RESPONSE:

- The School Estate Review does not seek to remove schools from rural communities but rather to provide schools on a community basis that are viable and able to deliver a quality education in quality buildings. This is consistent with the Comhairle policy on community schools and with the Economic Development definition of sustainable communities.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

ISSUE: There are few services in local communities and the closure of the school removes a key service and may encourage other services to move.

RESPONSE:

- The school is only one of a number of services in any community and like other services it can only exist where there is a viable demand. The level of service provision in a community more frequently reflects the demands placed upon it by demographics, population and the economy.
- The School Estate Review should be seen in the context of a wider review of Council services and Community Planning.
- The Comhairle has recently provided enhanced care services in the Carloway area, to meet needs which reflect the demographic profile.

PRE SCHOOL PROVISION

ISSUE: Concern was expressed at the lack of pre-school provision in Carloway particularly in view of the fact the croileagans at both Shawbost and Breasclete were full.

RESPONSE:

- Current demand suggests that there are approximately 7 children in the area that would enrol in pre-school service in Carloway during the academic year 2010-11. As a result of community consultation, a pre-school service will be provided within the school, on a temporary basis, until June 2011. The Care Commission has approved this pilot provision on the basis that there will be no more than 8 children, that they are located within the school, and that the provision comes under the management of the Headteacher. It has been agreed with the local community to operate the provision on a temporary basis for one year.
- However, if Carloway School were to close, the Comhairle would look to extend pre-school provision at Shawbost to two sessions per day.

TRANSPORT

ISSUES: Costs Is it possible to explain the cost of transport at £39,247 when the majority of young people take public transport and of that 5 of them are within 1 mile radius of the school.

RESPONSE

- The formula for any bus journey is based on a combination of location and numbers travelling on the route. These figures were calculated based on a historical formula which has now been revised to reflect the current position. The current cost for transportation to Carloway School is £8,994.

<p>ISSUE: Distance The Community was concerned that the school to school distance from Carloway to Shawbost was 4 miles in the Proposal Document.</p> <p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The distance between the schools was confirmed with the Transportation Department as being 5 miles.
<p>ISSUE: Service Buses: A number of complaints were raised in relation to service buses including the quality of service, safety on the buses, supervision and child protection.</p> <p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Western Isles, in the interests of efficiency and services for the public, supports an integrated transport arrangement. This has operated for a period of approximately 14 years. On some routes, where there is demand and no capacity on the integrated service, dedicated school transport is provided. Over this period integrated transport has provided a good service with few complaints. This service was reviewed in 1999 and was the subject of a Best Value Review in 2008. • In light of recent community conversations we believe that it is time to consider a review of the integrated service versus dedicated school transport in some instances. In general, integrated transport is more economically viable and a solid business case will be required to bring about this policy change. • All bus contractors meet rigorous contractual obligations. All bus drivers have appropriate SCRO checks and the service is delivered to a high standard. Drivers and the public have, where appropriate, made referrals in terms of any nuisance behaviour on buses, or child protection concerns. All of these are robustly investigated and dealt with. • The integrated and dedicated transport provision does not have supervisory staff on the buses. Dedicated transport for children with additional support needs, whether taxi or buses, may have auxiliary support provided dependent on assessed needs. Where concerns have been raised regarding passenger behaviour, buses have been fitted with CCTV cameras. • In practice it is observed, that on some routes, the adult presence on the bus has a positive effect on pupil behaviour. This can reduce bullying or other nuisance behaviour and makes travel for young people safer.
<p>ISSUE: Transporting children by bus to school reduces their ability to walk or cycle to school.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order to give young people the opportunity to walk or cycle to school in line with the National Walk to School initiative, a review of the Comhairle's Home to School Travel policy will be undertaken. Consideration may be given within the review to ensuring pick up/drop off points, to provide an opportunity to walk or cycle.
<p>ISSUE: Closure of Carloway School would lengthen the school day due to the longer distances pupils are required to travel.</p> <p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated provision at Shawbost School would add a maximum of 15 minutes to the travel time. All pupils would still be within the 30 minute maximum travelling time as outlined in the Comhairle's Home to School Travel Policy

ISSUE: The Community was anxious to know the time that children would be picked up and returned home.

RESPONSE:

- In the majority of rural schools within the Outer Hebrides, the catchment area is greater than the one mile distance.
- The distances that pupils have to travel to and from school are clearly important in any assessment of appropriate transport provision. In addition, distances of themselves have to be set in the context of road conditions and the time that such travelling takes.
- The Comhairle Policy states that Primary pupils should not, as a rule have to travel more than thirty minutes on a bus or Secondary pupils more than 60 minutes. However, on occasions where pupils are living in a remote location, which would mean that their journey to school was longer than the policy stated, reasonable steps would be taken to minimise their journey time.
- The pick up at the furthest distance (Tolsta Chaolais) will be at approximately 8.18am and the drop-off will be at approximately 3.40pm. This is considered appropriate and is well within the policy supported by the Comhairle.

ISSUE: Road conditions: Concern was expressed in relation to condition of roads and gritting.

RESPONSE

- The main road from Tolsta Chaolais to Shawbost is dual track with a good surface. As a result of unusually severe weather conditions in January 2010, all schools in Lewis were closed for one day while the situation was being assessed. Carloway School opened the following day and had no further closures as a result of road condition caused by severe weather.

FINANCE

ISSUES: Concern was expressed in relation to the accuracy of the financial figures and questions raised as to whether all costs were included, e.g. redundancy, transport, staffing, Gaelic and buildings.

RESPONSE

- The annual budgeted school running cost per pupil, as reported to Scottish Government, is obtained by dividing the total budgeted school running cost by the school roll. The total revised cost for 2010/11 is detailed in the following table.

Carloway School 2010	
DESCRIPTION	TOTAL BUDGET
Employee Expenses	159,950
Premises Related Expenditure	8,922
Utilities Related Expenditure	9,130
Resources Related Expenditure	7,323
Transport Related Expenditure	8,994
Catering Related Expenditure	9,175
Net Expenditure	203,494
Parent Council Funding	439
TOTAL	203,933
Number of Pupils	15
COST PER PUPIL	13,596

- In terms of any staffing implications arising from school closures, this would be addressed in the context of the Comhairle's Human Resources Strategy.

ISSUE: Shared Headship - Concern was expressed that the Department's commitment to non-teaching Shared Headship may have increased the staffing costs of Carloway.

RESPONSE

- The teaching staff complement at Carloway School is 2.0 FTE teachers and 0.4 FTE itinerant teachers giving an overall complement of 2.4 FTE staff. The school has a shared headship arrangement with Bragar School.
- Shared Headship costs are apportioned equally across the relevant schools.
- Teaching headships require time out of class for management duties. By combining three schools within a Shared Headship arrangement, there are no additional overall costs. In a situation where the arrangements involve only two schools there is an additional cost.

OTHER SCHOOL OPTIONS

ISSUES: A number of people asked why Breasclete School was not selected for proposed closure as part of the Education Provision Review.

RESPONSE

- Breasclete School formed part of the community conversation and consultation with Bernera, and in the event of school amalgamation it would not be viable to bring Bernera, Breasclete and Carloway together into Carloway. Currently, Breasclete School forms part of a Shared Headship arrangement with Uig School.

ISSUES: Cancel the (Western Isles Schools Project) WISP initiative and invest the money currently being spent on the Nicolson Institute on the other schools.

RESPONSE

- The new Nicolson Institute is part of a (WISP) initiative that must be viewed in the context of the overall School Estate Review. The proposed School Estate Review is designed to ensure better use of the school estate at lower cost and with enhanced educational provision. To divert the funding from the schools project to sustain schools that are operating below capacity and to maintain buildings which are in poor condition, would not be the most efficient and effective use of public funds. Furthermore, the funding for the Schools Project is only available for new school builds and cannot be used for any other purposes.
- The WISP initiative will provide new school buildings for 40% of the school population. This will directly benefit all secondary pupils in Lewis and, in relation to this consultation, all pupils from the Carloway area.
- The Department is not aware of any housing or economic development plan, which would have any significant impact on the pupil population.
- However, the WISP initiative has secured £54m of building contracts, which will provide a significant level of employment and income over the next two years. In addition, the refurbishment of the existing school estate will provide further opportunities for economic activity.

IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY**ISSUES:** Community Centre use and income**RESPONSE**

- The school currently uses the community centre for 2 hours per week at a total cost of £16 (approximately £700 per annum). During the consultation, it was stated by community representatives that the Community Centre has in excess of 200 community bookings per annum. It would therefore appear that the loss of school income would not be perceived as having any material impact on the viability of the community facility. The Community Centre does not form part of this consultation and will remain open.
- In response to the issues raised in the community consultations, the Department is actively looking at ways of providing a community development resource in each area where a school may close. This was with a view to encourage and support local communities to develop and use local resources for recreational, learning and other community uses. A stage 2 European Social Fund application has recently been submitted.

ISSUES: Impact on local businesses and tourism.**RESPONSE**

- Garenin Village, the Broch and Harris Tweed provide the principal tourist attractions in the area. In addition, there are a number of small studios and other associated tourist initiatives.
- However, these initiatives have not arrested the decline in pupil population and there is no current economic development or housing initiative to suggest that there are any new initiatives that would result in significant growth in the pupil population.
- It is not anticipated that the absence of a school would have a significant impact on local business development or tourism.
- Continued use of funding to support under-capacity in schools, will result in the Comhairle having less resources to invest in economic development.

ISSUE: People chose to live where a school is located – schools define communities.**RESPONSE**

- The Education and Children's Services Department recognises that many parents choose to move to the Western Isles for very positive reasons such as an opportunity to live in a small town, small villages and very rural areas.
- It is not possible to provide schools in every location where people choose to live in order that children can walk or cycle to school.
- The Department attempts to provide schools within community areas in order to ensure accessibility in line with the Home to School Travel Policy.
- The Comhairle considers a community to be defined by an area rather than by individual villages, e.g. Ness, Westside and Uig.
- Since 1997 the Comhairle remains committed to the concept of an Area School being the most cost-effective method of delivering education within a community setting.

ISSUE: Community links and participation with the school in social and learning activities.**RESPONSE**

- All community consultations supported the strong link between the community and the school and the opportunities provided for inter-generational learning activities. However, given the distances involved in the integration with Shawbost, and the community links which currently exist and which have been reflected in the strong parental support for S1-2 provision at Shawbost, there is no evidence that there would be a reduction in community engagement for primary pupils.

BUILDINGS
<p>ISSUES: Condition survey of school building: Community requested that the condition survey be updated in light of recent works and the length of time since the previous survey had been carried out.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subsequent to the consultation, a further condition survey has been undertaken by independent surveyors. This was based on all works undertaken since the previous survey and the results would indicate that Carloway School remains categorised as Condition C.
<p>ISSUES: There were concerns expressed that Shawbost School would not have the capacity to accommodate Bragar and Carloway Schools.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the event that the S1-2 provision continues at Shawbost School there will still be capacity to accommodate Carloway and/or Bragar Schools based on current enrolments and future projections. School enrolments have for the last 30 years declined in the Western Isles and while all schools have had an element of variation over this period of time, it is clear that based on current population statistics, the school rolls in the Shawbost, Bragar and Carloway area are not likely to rise significantly. Growth in pupil populations would have to reflect a significant development in economic activity, housing expansion and migration. There is no evidence at this time to suggest that this will happen.

SCHOOL ROLLS
<p>ISSUES: There was a strong community feeling that small class sizes were better.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective learning and teaching is highly dependent on children's ability to interact with their peer group and teacher in relation to their learning. There is no evidence to suggest that very small composite classes do better than the maximum composite class size of 25 pupils. Some of the specific benefits of attending a school with a larger roll in the context of the Western Isles are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased opportunities for pupils, including both curricular and extra curricular A larger pupil population will enable greater flexibility in grouping children for learning and teaching There will also be greater flexibility in the development of staff to meet the learning needs of pupils The pupils will have access to a wider range of activities than are available to them at present. This will be in larger groupings, alongside pupils of similar ages. In the event of Carloway School amalgamating with Shawbost and Bragar Schools, class sizes would still be considered small and would be within the maximum composite class size of 25. It is the view of the Education and Children's Services Department that quality of teaching is the single most important factor, not the class size. This view is supported in the recent 'Review of Class Size Control Mechanisms' as reported in August 2010 by the Working Group set up by the Scottish Government.

- Douglas Cairns, HMIe Assistant Chief Inspector advised the Scottish Government's Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee (2010) that "by and large, the spectrum of quality across small rural primary schools seems to be much the same as the national average." Therefore it can be seen from the above comments that there is no definitive advantage to be gained for pupils being educated in a smaller school.

AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

ISSUES: Many parents expressed concern regarding the cut in funding for extra curricular activities, accessibility to children who live far from the school and the availability of transport.

- RESPONSE**
- After school activity funding is transparent and equitably distributed across all schools in the Western Isles. It is the case that the bigger the school and the more staff within it the broader the range and provision of after school activities.
 - If children want to participate in after-school activities, schools generally make arrangements for children to get passes on the service bus, or where possible will arrange other transport.
 - After school activities will also continue to be supported through Community Education, Sport and Health and the Voluntary Sector in local communities.

ISSUE: Participation in sports, local Mods and other team or group activities. Parents and staff are concerned that smaller schools have greater levels of inclusion in these activities in contrast to the bigger schools where there may be more competition for spaces.

- RESPONSE:**
- Pupils will have the same opportunity for participating in these activities in receiving schools. The amalgamation of these schools is not creating a very large school, but does create a school that has the potential to provide more opportunities for young people.

LEGISLATION

ISSUES: Many parents consider that section 1.19 of the Safeguarding our Rural Schools 2008 document contradicts the Comhairle's Proposal Document. *"In some communities where there is no longer a shop or Post Office, the school may be one of very few services still left within the community, functioning both as a 'children's centre' and as a focal point for community activities. Closure could have implications for the future sustainability of the whole community, far beyond the issue of the provision of education. Its loss would certainly be likely to have a proportionately greater impact than would be the case in an urban area."*

- RESPONSE**
- The current School Estate Review is designed to ensure that the Western Isles continues to have accessible school and nursery education in rural communities. All schools in the Western Isles are classified as very remote and rural. In this regard, implementation of the proposed strategy would ensure the continuation of education in very remote rural schools within Western Isles communities.

PUPIL ATTAINMENT
<p>ISSUES: There were a number of questions focused on Carloway School's HMIE Inspection Report and pupil attainment - "Why close a good school".</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consultation exercise arising from the School Estate Review is not based on a criticism of the attainment profile of the individual schools, but rather on its viability and the ability of the Comhairle, to provide quality education in quality buildings more efficiently. • There is no evidence to suggest that the amalgamation of Bragar and Carloway in Shawbost School would result in any detriment to levels of educational attainment. However, it will provide a better learning environment with more resources and better class groupings to facilitate learning and teaching.

GAELIC
<p>ISSUES: Carloway School is regarded as having a strong Gaelic ethos and community support for Gaelic.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school estate review will ensure that all school provision in the Western Isles will have GME provision. The Department is committed to the Comhairle's Gaelic Plan and is working to ensure that increasing numbers of staff have a basic competence in Gaelic language. Increasing emphasis is being placed on encouraging staff to take up available CPD opportunities, e.g. Ulpan and evening classes. • The Comhairle in recent years has seen a steady growth in its enrolment in Gaelic Medium Education. The Education and Children's Services Department's revised Gaelic Plan will set a target of at least 50% of P1 enrolments in Gaelic medium education over the next 3 years. This is considered realistic, on the basis that many parents, whose children are enrolled in Croileagan, do not enrol their children in Gaelic medium education. This is due to the fact that their local school only provides education through the medium of English. • Carloway School provides a Gaelic ethos with 3 children in a P1-7 composite class. A move to Shawbost would enable these children to participate with a peer group of 16 children. This will provide a better environment for the acquisition and use of Gaelic whilst also providing more opportunities for collaborative learning and group interaction. • Shawbost School also has a long established Gaelic Medium provision.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS
<p>ISSUES: Many parents feel that the small rural school and Carloway School in particular provides good support for children with additional support needs.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Education and Children's Services Department is required to provide appropriate support for all young people with additional support needs, as detailed in legislation. Support is provided, irrespective of the school. The Education and Children's Services Department supports approximately 1100 children in 38 schools and is compliant with current legislation and best practice guidance. The Authority's additional support needs provision has been positively evaluated by HMIE inspection processes. • Shawbost School has the facilities to cater for the needs of all children with additional support needs similar to those at Carloway School.

EMPLOYMENT
<p>ISSUES: The Community, pupils, parents and staff expressed concern that the closure of a small rural school will have a significant effect on local employment.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Education and Children's Services Department recognises that school closures may affect employment in the area. In order for the Comhairle to develop a robust development strategy and a stronger economic base to the local economy, it is necessary to identify funding that will support economic regeneration, rather than inefficient investment in unsustainable schools. • In terms of any staffing implications arising from school closures, this would be addressed in the context of the Comhairle's Human Resources Strategy.

HMIe REPORT

- 7.1 In line with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, a report was provided by HM Inspectorate on the educational aspects of the proposed closure of Carloway School and the transfer of pupils to Shawbost School . This report is attached as Appendix D.
- 7.2 The Report also identifies issues for consideration by the Comhairle as follows.

HMIe REPORT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ISSUE: The Comhairle should assess the sufficiency and suitability of primary classroom accommodation at Shawbost School, particularly within the context of <i>Curriculum for Excellence</i>. In particular the Comhairle requires to address the implications for primary accommodation should its proposals for Bragar Primary School also go ahead and if secondary education continues beyond June 2012. <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Comhairle has assessed the sufficiency and suitability of primary classroom accommodation at Shawbost School against the national standards and is satisfied that there is capacity to accommodate both Carloway and Bragar pupils, should the secondary department continue beyond 2012. • The Learning Community Principal and the Headteacher have undertaken a review of the accommodation based on projected pupil rolls. This review demonstrates how classes would be accommodated and Curriculum for Excellence delivered, in the event that S1-2 provision continues beyond 2012.
<p>ISSUE: The Comhairle should assess the effects of its proposal on the financial viability and sustainability of the community's future access and use of Carloway community hall.</p> <p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Comhairle will work with the community and other partners to maximise the use of the Community Hall and other community venues. • 200 bookings in relation to relatively small usage by the school, is considered to provide opportunities for ensuring continued viability. The Comhairle, subsequent to the consultation, has prepared a European Social Fund Application supporting community development appointments in all areas where schools might closing. This application is currently being considered at stage 2.

ISSUE: The Comhairle should ascertain the number of pre-school children in the Carloway area to ensure there is sufficient future pre-school and primary school provision.

RESPONSE:

- The Comhairle has ascertained the number of children in the area and has worked with the community to provide an appropriate resource on a pilot basis in the school.
- If Carloway School were to close, the Comhairle would look to extend pre-school provision at Shawbost to two sessions per day.

ISSUE: The Comhairle should assess its proposals for the transport of children to Shawbost School to ensure their welfare and safety.

RESPONSE:

- The Comhairle will continue to provide transportation that meets all contract specifications and which ensures safe travel for all pupils.
- All bus contractors meet rigorous contractual obligations. All bus drivers have appropriate SCRO checks and the service is delivered to a high standard. Where concerns have been raised regarding passenger behaviour, buses have been fitted with CCTV cameras. Drivers and the public have, where appropriate, made referrals in terms of any nuisance behaviour on buses, or child protection concerns. All of these are robustly investigated and addressed.
- Pupils will be picked up and dropped off adjacent to their home. Parents are responsible for the safety of their child at pick up and drop off points. This is consistent with practice across the country. However, contractors could be asked to use hazard warning light as an added safety measure when picking-up and dropping-off pupils.

ISSUE: The Comhairle should take full account of the composite response submitted by Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

RESPONSE:

- Bòrd na Gàidhlig commented on areas where the Education and Children's Services Department should do further work to promote Gàidhlig and, in particular, the uptake of Gaelic Medium Education.
- As a result, the Education and Children's Services Department has re-focused its bid proposal for Gaelic Specific Grant to work with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and partners to increase the primary enrolment numbers and maximise opportunities for Gaelic Medium Education. This will also include the possibility of later entry to Gaelic Medium Education and an emphasis on Gaelic Medium Education in all pre-school provision associated with local primary schools.
- Pupils currently in GME in Carloway School would transfer to Gaelic Medium Education in Shawbost School.
- The Comhairle in recent years has seen a steady growth in its enrolment in Gaelic Medium Education. The Education and Children's Services Department's revised Gaelic Plan will set a target of at least 50% of P1 enrolments in Gaelic medium education over the next 3 years. This is considered realistic on the basis that many parents whose children are enrolled in Croileagan do not enrol their children in Gaelic medium education where there local school only provides education through the medium of English.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION WITH PUPILS

- 8.1 Dependent on the size of the school, consultation with pupils was carried out on the basis of a representative focus group and a cross section of stages or whole school. In each school the children and young people were asked to work in groups to identify:
- Benefits in bringing the schools together
 - Issues of concern
 - Areas they felt they might need help with
- 8.2 In this consultation it was the unanimous view of all pupils that they wanted to retain their own school.

Summary of Consultation with Carloway School Pupils

Benefits:

- More friends for transfer to the NI
- Access to a swimming pool
- Bigger playground
- More subjects
- Bigger gym
- Fresher food
- More equipment
- Pupils felt they would know everyone from their community
- Everyone could be more friendly
- Nobody is left out or bullied
- We have lots of friends
- We will know people
- Lots of different things to do
- Meet new people.

Issues of Concern

- There would be less trips in a bigger school
- There would be less chance of getting in to teams for sports or mod
- You would have to get up earlier for the bus
- You would not know everybody
- Population in Carloway would go down and people would not move to Carloway
- We would miss our teachers
- You couldn't walk to school
- Bigger school, might not know where to go

RESPONSE:

These issues were discussed with the pupils and where possible answers were provided. It was accepted that there may be whole school trips and that there may be competition for places in some sports and activities. However, all pupils were advised that trips, sports and the Mod competitions would all continue, and that they would have the opportunity for participation.

Areas where we might help

- Stay in the same class as your friends
- Sit beside somebody you want to and you know
- Encourage people to be nice to you
- Don't close Carloway School
- Bring the teachers from Carloway to Shawbost and Shawbost to Carloway
- Arrange for Carloway pupils to have a tour around Shawbost
- Arrange an induction day
- Move Shawbost to Carloway

RESPONSE:

Most of the suggestions provided by pupils were reasonable and an undertaking was given that, should the proposal be accepted, there would be further discussion with the pupils in order to prepare a transition plan.

Questions that pupils wanted to ask were in relation to:

- Could money for new roads be used to keep old schools open?
- In order to increase the numbers could we not change the boundaries between schools?
- Pupils felt that without the school the population may fall
- Pupils felt that there were more young people under school age and that the nursery in the area would support this
- Had we looked at developing a Gaelic school in the area?
- They had heard the bigger schools had security cameras everywhere including the toilets
- Would the teachers lose their jobs if the school closed?

RESPONSE:

These questions were discussed with the pupils and where possible answers were provided.

Summary of Consultation with Shawbost School Pupils as the receiving School

Benefits

- More friends to play with
- Meet more people
- Be able to ask more people for help
- Other schools don't have to then travel for PE and swimming
- Would have more people interested in competitions
- More children to give you advice or their opinions
- Bigger groups and therefore more people to play games
- More people to peer assess

Issues of Concern

- Teachers would lose their jobs
- Not enough space
- Might not be enough classrooms
- Classrooms might be overcrowded
- There might not be enough equipment or books
- Might cost too much
- Have a longer lunch break
- Canteen might not be big enough and you would have to sit with people you don't like
- Too many people means to much noise
- Teachers might not be able to cope
- You would need more buses to collect people
- There would be no use for the other school buildings
- More fights
- Might be hard to keep children under control
- Carloway and Bragar would have to do a lot of travelling

RESPONSE:

These issues were discussed with the pupils and where possible answers provided.

Areas where we might help

- Provide more table and chairs
- Provide more equipment and books
- Raise money for the school like coffee mornings
- Make a bigger school
- Have more activities
- Provide more facilities and a bigger playground
- Organise a fun day to welcome pupils
- Have a person at lunch time to get everybody together to play a game
- Tell them to be quiet and not fight with each other
- Tell them to ask to ask the teacher for help
- Encourage people to help other children
- Use more classes at a time so not as many teachers would lose their jobs
- Separate classes go to the lunch line at different times
- Have more fun days

RESPONSE:

Most of the suggestions provided by pupils were reasonable and an undertaking was given that, should the proposal be accepted, there would be further discussion with the pupils in order to prepare a transition plan.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION WITH STAFF

- 9.1 All teaching and non teaching staff were invited to attend consultations regarding the Comhairle's proposals. The staff made the following observations which they wished to be recorded.

- Staff would not like to see school closures as they believe that this will have an impact on the community
- School closures increase migration and is the seed bed for community decline
- Staff are concerned that there may be a loss in jobs, not just in teaching staff but in the community
- Staff felt that provision of a croilegan would increase pupil enrolment
- Staff are concerned in 1990 the school roll was very low yet in one year 16 babies were born and entered the same class, could this not happen again?
- CPD is available in the community and a bigger school does not always equate to better – sometimes staff feel small is more efficient
- ICT within Carloway School is well resourced and GLOW meets many of the needs of staff
- Swimming is provided in all schools according to policy
- Small schools give all children more opportunities not only in learning and teaching but in participation for clubs, sports, mod etc.
- Staff believe their building is ok and their classrooms are much bigger than those in Shawbost and the children will possibly be moving into a more cramped space in Shawbost
- Pupils within the school show a high degree of support for each other

In relation to the Proposal Document staff wished to make specific comments on the followings sections.

- **8.7 Additional Support Needs** – Staff believe needs are equally met in Carloway to any other school. However, they feel that the more that are brought in to a smaller number of school, the greater potential there is for disruption.
- **8.9** – Staff question whether all children would be given equal opportunity in the larger school and feel that more children could be excluded from clubs, activities or sports and the transport would provide a significant barrier to access.
- **Staffing** – Staff have concerns regarding the loss of teaching jobs.
- **Level of savings** – Staff believe £2 million did not sound much and wondered whether the investment in new schools and/or realignment of council finances could meet this cost
- **Transport** – staff are concerned that Appendix 3 (School Transport) at £40,000 did not seem to be right and therefore have asked that we consider looking at the difference in these figures between Bragar and Carloway.

Response

The formula for any bus journey is based on a combination of distance and numbers travelling on the route. These figures were calculated based on a historical formula which has now been revised to reflect the current position. The current cost for transportation to Carloway School is £8,994.

CONCLUSION

- 10.1 Throughout this consultation the Comhairle has given special regard to the provision for rural schools within Section 12 of the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010,

- 10.2 In recognition of the impact of schools closures on local communities, the Comhairle undertook, in addition to statutory consultation, community conversations in order to share with stakeholders the challenges for education together with its aspirations for a review of educational provision designed to provide 'Quality Education in Quality Buildings'.
- 10.3 The consultation process was robust and provided an opportunity for all stakeholders to identify key issues of concern. These issues have been fully considered and the Comhairle's response detailed in sections 6, 7, 8 and 9 above.
- 10.4 The Standards in Schools (Scotland) Act 2000 requires local authorities " to secure that the education is directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest potential". (Para 2.1)
- 10.5 HMle visited Carloway School to speak to parents, pupils and staff. They attended the public meeting on 9 June 2010 and had the opportunity to review in detail the proposal document and all written responses.
- 10.6 In summary, the HMle Report recognises the merits of the closure proposal.
"The proposal from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to close Carloway Primary School and transfer children to Shawbost School from August 2012, offers some educational benefits to children directly affected by the proposal and more widely across Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. Children would have greater opportunity to learn and engage in social activities with others of the same age and stage. They would have access to a modern and well-maintained building, although there are concerns about the sufficiency and suitability of primary classrooms. Children's learning would be supported through access to the wide range of ICT available at Shawbost School. Those learning through Gaelic medium education would benefit from being part of larger groups made up of children of similar ages. Children would be able to take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, although travel could restrict some children's participation."
- 10.7 The HMle report provides evidence that the proposal to amalgamate Carloway School with Shawbost School will produce:
 Educational benefits:
- Can deliver Curriculum for Excellence effectively
 - Will assure more effective use of resources – financial, staffing and estate
 - Will ensure that pupils are educated in buildings fit for the 21st Century
- 10.8 In its submission in response to the consultations, Bòrd na Gàidhlig commented on areas where the Education and Children's Services Department should do further work to promote Gàidhlig and, in particular, the uptake of Gaelic Medium Education. However the Bòrd welcomed Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's aspiration that GME should be available in all primary schools in the Western Isles through the implementation of the Schools Estate Strategy. In particular, Bòrd na Gàidhlig would not oppose the closure of Carloway School.
- 10.9 The Director of Education and Children's Services, on reviewing all of the submissions, the HMle report, Bòrd na Gàidhlig's response and the Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix C) recommends that the best and most sustainable educational provision for the current catchment area of Carloway Primary School would be provided at Shawbost School and that the education provision should be discontinued at Carloway Primary School from 29 June 2012.
- 10.10 The Director of Education and Children's Services recommends that a transfer of pupils from Carloway to Shawbost School will have educational benefits and that the learning opportunities and experience for pupils will be significantly widened. There will be :
- increased opportunities for pupils, both curricular and extra-curricular activities;
 - greater flexibility in grouping children for learning and teaching;
 - greater flexibility in the deployment of staff to meet learning needs;
 - a larger staff will offer a wider range of expertise resulting in increased opportunities for sharing effective practice, more collegiate support and a wider range of learning and teaching approaches;
 - more management support to promote school improvement.

- 10.11 Pupils and parents of Carloway School would have access to a modern educational establishment, which is fully equipped and designed to meet the needs of pupils and fully deliver a Curriculum for Excellence. There is an opportunity for the pupils, staff and parents of both schools to benefit from working together to ensure that the very best quality of learning and teaching is available to all pupils, irrespective of their needs or abilities.
- 10.12 The proposal will result in pupils at Carloway School attending a building that is modern and better designed for the delivery of a 21st Century curriculum.
- 10.13 The closure of Carloway School will both improve efficiency of the school estate and enable investment in education and provide a better educational experience for pupils.
- 10.14 Should the proposal be approved the Director of Education and Children's Services will work with parents and staff in Carloway and Shawbost Schools to develop a transition plan that will ensure an effective transition for pupils and staff to Shawbost School.

RECOMMENDATION

- 11.1 It is recommended that
- a) the Education provision at Carloway Primary School be discontinued with effect from 29 June 2012;
 - b) the pupils of Carloway Primary School continue their education at Shawbost School, from 16 August 2012; and
 - c) the catchment area of Shawbost School be extended to include the current catchment area of Carloway Primary School.