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**Review of Education Provision
at
ERISKAY PRIMARY SCHOOL
Isle of South Uist**

**CONSULTATION REPORT
JANUARY 2014**

Roinn an Fhoghlaim is Seirbheisean Chloinne

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR
Education and Children’s Services Department

Review of Education Provision
CONSULTATION REPORT FOR ERISKAY SCHOOL

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Review of Education Provision at Eriskay School Consultation Report

Report by Director of Education and Children's Services

CONSIDER THE PROPOSAL THAT:

- **Eriskay Primary School be closed with effect from 27 June 2014;**
- **the pupils of Eriskay Primary School continue their education at Daliburgh School, from 14 August 2014;**
- **the catchment area of Daliburgh School be extended to include the current catchment area of Eriskay Primary School.**

BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Comhairle, at its meeting on 12 September 2013, 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 Eriskay 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 Eriskay 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 of 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 19 September 2013 and the consultation ran thereafter for a period of 31 school days until 14 November 2013.
 - A public meeting was held on 9 October 2013.
 - Pupils and staff were also consulted separately.
 - Education Scotland involvement included being sent a copy of the proposal document, their visiting the affected schools and meeting with parents, pupils and staff. They also received a copy of all written representations. Education Scotland 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 requirements, 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 Eriskay Community Hall on 9 October 2013
 - Meetings with staff at Daliburgh School.
 - Meetings with former pupils of Eriskay Primary School at the pupils’ new school at Daliburgh.

OMISSIONS AND INACCURACIES

- 4.1 No omissions or inaccuracies were identified in this process.

REPRESENTATIONS

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

| Representations from: | Number |
|-----------------------|----------|
| • Local resident | 1 |
| TOTAL: | 1 |

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.

| FUTURE POPULATION ON ERISKAY |
|---|
| <p>ISSUE: The closure of Eriskay Primary School could contribute to further depopulation and may adversely affect the community, pupils' future well-being and protection of local traditions and language including participation within the school in social and learning activities.</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. • With the improved road infrastructure in the islands, there is evidence that people's choice of where to live may be determined by numerous factors, other than the presence of a school. • The range of community facilities will not be adversely affected by the closure of Eriskay School. The school is not used regularly by the community for events. The community tends to use the community hall which is a modern building with good facilities for events and is located close to the school. • Daliburgh Primary School is used for a range of community courses and events, several of which are key to promoting Gaelic, sport and community learning. The facilities at Daliburgh are new, offering high quality resources for community learning. • Strong links exist between schools and their communities. Schools are required to ensure that the environment, geography, culture, language and social context of the community they serve are reflected in the curriculum and the activities of the school. There is good evidence to demonstrate how this has been achieved in all areas in the Western Isles where there has been an amalgamation of smaller schools serving a larger community. • On this basis there is good reason to believe that the community of South Uist, including Eriskay, will enjoy a good relationship with the local school in Daliburgh. |

| COMMUNITY SERVICES ON ERISKAY |
|---|
| <p>ISSUE: There are limited public services in Eriskay and the closure of the school removes yet another key service. There is a fear that this may result in other services being removed from the community.</p> <p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is only one of a number of services in the community. • The level of service provision in the community is more frequently dependent on the demands placed upon it by demographics, population and, critically, the economy. • There is no evidence in the Western Isles of schools in rural communities being the reason for population growth. However, in circumstances where there is economic development creating employment opportunities there is evidence of inward migration. Research suggests a ratio of approximately 28 primary school children and 20 secondary school children for every 100 houses built. • There are no current proposals for significant housing development in Eriskay of a scale that would result in an increased pupil population sufficient to establish a viable Primary School. • The School Estate Review should be seen in the context of a wider review of Council services and Community Planning. |

'MOTHBALLING' THE SCHOOL

ISSUE: There were concerns that the school buildings would quickly fall into a state of disrepair if not used. It was suggested that the school premises should be 'mothballed' for future educational use should there be an increase in the number of children living in the area.

RESPONSE:

- Comhairle staff have carried out winter roof and gutter checks. Remedial works have been undertaken to ensure that the premises are wind and watertight. Maintenance staff carry out regular checks of the premises.
- Population information from census and health service records indicates that there will be no significant change in the number of families in the immediate future.
- There is no evidence in the Western Isles of schools in rural communities being the reason for population growth. However, in circumstances where there is economic development creating employment opportunities there is evidence of inward migration. Research suggests a ratio of approximately 28 primary school children and 20 secondary school children for every 100 houses built.
- Parents of primary-aged pupils currently resident on Eriskay have chosen Daliburgh for their children's education.
- There are currently no pupils enrolled in Eriskay Primary School. All parents would have preferred have their children educated in Eriskay School. However, with the decline in enrolment, parents accepted that the educational provision was not viable and while they believed their children had a good education in Eriskay School they recognised the benefits provided in a larger school.
- On this basis there is no evidence to support the financial investment required to mothball the school or improve the building to bring it to condition category B status with little or no prospect of re-opening the school.

SMALL SCHOOLS PROVIDE BETTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

ISSUES: Small schools, such as Eriskay, allow better teacher/child ratios, better management of behaviour and more effective community links.

RESPONSE

- There is no evidence to suggest that small schools provide better educational outcomes than larger schools in the context of the Western Isles.
- Effective learning and teaching is 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.
- It is the view of the Director of Education and Children's Services that quality of teaching is the single most important factor in ensuring positive educational outcomes, not the class size.
- Some of the specific benefits of attending a school with a larger roll in the context of the Western Isles are:
 - Increased opportunities for pupils, including both curricular and extra-curricular.
 - A larger pupil population enables greater flexibility in grouping children for learning and teaching.
 - There is greater flexibility in the deployment of staff to meet the learning needs of pupils.
 - Pupils have access to a wider range of activities than was available to them at Eriskay Primary School. This includes larger groupings, alongside pupils of similar ages.

- At Daliburgh School, class sizes are still considered small and are within the maximum composite class size of 25.
- At Daliburgh School, the Principal Teacher and Headteacher provide regular and full time management support respectively to the staff of the school. This helps ensure improved educational outcomes for all.

IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

ISSUE: People choose to live where a school is located – schools define communities.

RESPONSE

- Eriskay has a strong community identity and culture which exists separate from the school and involves a broad range of participants including the church, fishing, agriculture etc. The attendance of children in primary school is unlikely to undermine this. Eriskay also has a thriving community hall which hosts a number of community events.
- It is recognised 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.
- The Comhairle provides schools within recognised community areas in order to ensure accessible educational provision with adequate transport.
- 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 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 quality education in quality buildings. This is consistent with the Comhairle policy on community schools and with the Economic Development definition of sustainable communities.
- Following a decision in 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. The children of Eriskay will continue to participate in community activities in the wider community of South Uist

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

ISSUE: During previous consultation meetings, concerns about the proposed closure of Eriskay School raised by members of the public have not been satisfactorily addressed by the Comhairle.

RESPONSE

- The record of the public consultation meetings regarding the proposed closure of Eriskay School has been reviewed. Issues raised at the public meeting relate to the transport of pupils, the potential future impact on the community of Eriskay and the quality of education offered at Daliburgh School.
- All of these concerns, and others raised in the more recent consultation meeting, have been considered as part of the most recent consultation exercise.

SUPPORT STAFF

ISSUE: Staff will lose their jobs through the closure of Eriskay School.

RESPONSE

- The closure of Eriskay School has led to the reduction in the number of staff. However, current workforce planning, inclusive of Voluntary Early Retirement (VER), opportunities for redeployment, retraining, short-term contracts and discussions with unions are in place to ensure that the Comhairle has been able to operate within a no-redundancy situation.
- Staff were fully informed of the proposals and a significant majority supported in redeployment to new roles within the authority.

EDUCATION SCOTLAND (HMI) 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 Eriskay School. This report is attached as Appendix D. The Report also identifies issues for consideration by the Comhairle as follows.

| EDUCATION SCOTLAND (HMI) REPORT | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| ISSUE: | The care and welfare of children travelling from Eriskay to Daliburgh needs to be given careful consideration. |
| RESPONSE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eriskay School is approximately 8 miles from Daliburgh School. The Comhairle's Home to School Travel Policy provides transport for children who have to walk more than 1 mile. In addition, the Comhairle Policy states that Primary pupils should not, as a rule have to travel more than 40 minutes on a bus. For all pupils reasonable steps will be taken to minimise journey time. • The distances that pupils have to travel to and from school are clearly important in any assessment of the requirement to make 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 all of which is subject to risk assessment and monitoring. • In general, integrated and Comhairle transport provision does not have supervisory staff on the buses. Dedicated transport for children with ASN, whether taxi or buses, may have auxiliary support provided, dependent on assessed needs. • Numbers of pupils on buses do not exceed the stated capacity. • All bus contractors meet rigorous contractual obligations. All bus drivers have appropriate Disclosure Scotland 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 addressed. • 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 but 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. • It is observed that on some routes, the adult presence on the bus has a positive effect on pupil behaviour. It can reduce bullying or other nuisance behaviour. • In order to ensure a better travel experience, all service-providers are required to provide coaches rather than buses, and all children and young people will have individual seats. • Parents are responsible for their children when travelling to and from school and at lunchtime. The driver is responsible for children whilst on school transport, whether this is provided through a dedicated service, or through the integrated transport provision. • Research conducted into the effect of travel to school does not say that children should not travel, but has highlighted some things which should be considered to reduce any negative effects. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a good quality bus • Competent and friendly driver • Shortest route possible • Exercise before school |

- On this basis, the Education and Children's Services Department has ensured that there are good buses on the route, competent drivers, and that pupils travelling from the same area are together. All of these factors are reinforced within service contracts, and have proved to be effective over many years.
- The Comhairle will continue to provide transportation that meets all contract specifications and which ensures safe travel for all its pupils.
- Although the travel time for pupils formerly attending Eriskay has increased this is within Comhairle policy requirements and guidance for primary aged pupils.
- Copies of the Comhairle 'Home to School' policy are issued to all parents of children using Comhairle transport.
- The Comhairle takes full account of weather conditions in planning transport arrangements and ensuring pupil safety travelling to school. Journeys to school will be cancelled if the weather conditions are judged to be prohibitive to ensuring safety. There are effective communication systems in place through local radio and messaging services, which ensure that parents are timeously informed of any proposed school closure.
- Children travelling to school from Eriskay to Daliburgh use Comhairle transport that is shared by members of the public. This is a common practice across the islands. In such arrangements the driver is suitably trained and qualified to ensure children's safety, health and welfare. Any concerns or incidents can be reported immediately by a driver to help maintain the safety of pupils. The bus brings pupils to the school and they are then overseen by school based staff.
- The Comhairle 'Home School Transport' policy [Home to School Transport Policy](#) states that the "Comhairle will aim to limit all journeys for primary pupils to no more than 40 minutes".
- However, consistent with previous practice, reasonable steps would be taken to minimise pupils' journey time.
- The Comhairle has committed to looking at solutions, in the context of the tendering specification of new bus service contracts from April 2015, which would reduce travelling time for pupils from the more distant areas by using minibuses and/or taxis to take pupils to identified pick-up points so that travel to and from school would be as direct as possible.

ISSUE: Community internet access is through the school server and the Comhairle needs to address how this means of communication will be sustained in the long-term.

RESPONSE:

- The server for 'Connected Communities' is currently located in the school premises and provides internet access for the island community. The server will continue to be located in the school premises, accessible through the Comhairle office, until a decision is made regarding the future use of the Eriskay school building.
- Should it be necessary in the future, the server could be moved into the community hall.
- Access to the server can be obtained through officers in the Technical Services Department at the Comhairle. Regular checks of the building have been undertaken since June 2013 and any required repairs and maintenance have been undertaken, as necessary.
- On previous occasions, where public sector buildings that were intermediate links for residential broadband have been moved into community ownership or have been offered for private sale, a stipulation within the sale agreement governed the retention of the Connected Communities antennae.
- In the future, the rollout of next generation broadband, based on current projections, will replace Connected Communities by the end of 2016, and consequently, existing equipment will be replaced and upgraded.

- Looking to the future, the Scottish Government, through the Scottish Wide Area Network (SWAN), is currently coming to the conclusion of a tendering exercise for a new Public Sector network that will also include provision for all schools in the Western Isles from September 2016 onwards.
- Once this process is complete, the preferred supplier will be meeting with each Local Authority to discuss the specific requirements of their sites including all schools, and will outline plans and timescales for individual sites.

ISSUE: Concern was expressed that the vacant school building could fall into a state of disrepair.

RESPONSE:

- The physical condition of the building has been monitored through weekly checks undertaken by officers of the Comhairle. Low levels of heating have been maintained throughout the winter period to date. Repairs have been undertaken and will continue to be completed, as required.
- Disposal of the school building will be consistent with Comhairle policy which gives prominence to community interest.

ISSUE : The Comhairle should ensure that the quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements continue to improve.

RESPONSE:

- The Education Scotland Report in response to the consultation recognised the following positive aspects of education at Daliburgh School.
 - The enhanced learning environment provided by the new Daliburgh School.
 - The wide range of quality facilities offered by the newly built school offers improved opportunities and experiences for children.
 - Gaelic medium classes and English medium classes share the school's spacious provision for sports, dining and outdoor learning.
 - Information and communications technology resources are of a high standard.
 - The range of activities offered after school is very good.
 - The learning environment offers flexibility to meet the needs of learners well.
- A follow through inspection report on Daliburgh School was published in August 2013. This report noted that the school has improved in many areas since the original inspection
- Gaelic medium classes are offered at Daliburgh School and numbers in attendance are increasing.
- Opportunities for children to learn together across the school are provided and are having a positive impact on the ethos of the school.
- The inclusion of Eriskay children at Daliburgh School increases learning opportunities for all pupils and in particular those learning together in the Gaelic medium classes.
- Daliburgh School was inspected by HMI in September 2010 and there have been two further follow-through inspection reports, which were published in August 2011 and August 2012. In the latter report inspectors stated;
 - 'The school now uses a broader range of tools to evaluate and improve outcomes for children. This is impacting positively on children's learning experiences and the quality of the teaching. Staff are committed to continuing to improve all aspects of the school.
 - The headteacher and newly appointed principal teacher now monitor aspects of the work of the school and provide helpful feedback to staff to help them improve further.
 - The school has more robust information on children's attainment which they should now use more effectively to raise standards across the school'.

- The education authority continues to monitor the work of the school through regular visits from the quality improvement officer and the Learning Community Principal. The meetings provide challenge as well as support to the leadership of the school. The education authority has been actively involved in helping ensure the consistency of good teaching and learning.

ISSUE: The Comhairle should indicate how support for children and partnership working could be improved.

RESPONSE :

- Education Scotland, in their report, recognise that the new Daliburgh School is accessible for those who have a disability, offers an inclusive environment for children who have additional support needs and enhances learning and teaching for children.
- Across the Western Isles the allocation of additional support need resources is undertaken through a robust audit of need, which is subject to moderation ensuring equity of resource and support across all schools.
- Daliburgh School subsequent to amalgamation will have increased levels of Learning Support and specialist input based on the larger number of pupils. This provides greater efficiency in terms of staff deployment, training, consultancy and advice.
- Daliburgh School has early years and Gaelic provision ensuring continuity and consistency of approach and that is important for young people with additional support needs.
- The school environment provides more opportunities for planned learning activities in support of young people's learning plans, ensuring that they have access to whole class, small group, individual teaching areas, in addition to practical and play areas.
- Learning Support staff and specialist provision such as speech and language and psychological services work closely with class teachers, the Principal Teacher and Headteacher to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met.
- In the most recent HMI report, published in August 2013, inspectors reporting on Daliburgh School stated that, 'Staff have improved support for learning across the school'. Pupils with additional needs have access to designated staff and improved facilities to support individualised work, meeting their specific needs. Additional management staff also help ensure that the progress of pupils requiring support is monitored closely and regularly.
- Pupils' attendance at Daliburgh provides significant opportunities for improved links with the community particularly through the use of the facilities available in the new school. The Comhairle letting policy is currently under review and will provide further opportunities for school-age pupils and community groups to access high quality facilities and resources for sport, leisure and learning. For example, the local Feis has made use of Daliburgh School during the summer to promote Gaelic arts, music and culture. Over 50 primary-aged pupils regularly participate in this event from Eriskay and surrounding areas.
- Daliburgh School maintains a strong link with the community of Eriskay by planning school events, which will continue to be held on Eriskay.

ISSUE: The Comhairle need to be more explicit in describing the ways in which teaching sets are effective in terms of outcomes for children.

RESPONSE :

- At Daliburgh School teachers use 'sets' in key subjects and in certain stages of the school. The advantage of this arrangement is that the work planned for children can be matched more closely to their learning needs. Teachers are able to group children working at similar levels together, often in smaller numbers, to facilitate closer individual support.

- An advantage of the 'setting' arrangement is also that higher achieving pupils can be provided with appropriately challenging tasks to increase the pace of their learning.
- Teaching sets also allow for more flexible use of staff allowing staff, including school managers to contribute to teaching certain subjects using the particular expertise of individual teachers.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION WITH PUPILS

- 8.1 Interviews were held with pupils who had previously attended Eriskay Primary School. The pupils were interviewed on 9 October 2013 at Daliburgh School.
- 8.2 All of the children stated that they were happy in their new school. They identified a number of advantages in attending Daliburgh Primary. These include;
- The opportunity to work with different teachers and make new friends.
 - Better facilities, including a football pitch.
 - A wider circle of friends, which is helpful prior to transfer to secondary education at Lìonaclìet.
 - More play park equipment to use at break time.
 - Better ICT facilities.
 - More opportunities for children to socialise.
 - More choices for lunch and meals that are made on the school site, rather than transported.
- 8.3 Children were asked their views about the proposed closure of Eriskay Primary School. The children all stated that they felt sad that the school was closing. Specific comments included;
- I feel sad because all of my family went to that school.
 - Although I like travelling on the bus, it makes my school day a little longer.
 - I am pleased I am getting a better education and so I don't really mind.
 - I feel that the old school building should be used. Something like a bed and breakfast or a local history museum would be good.
- 8.4 These issues were discussed with the pupils and, where possible, age-appropriate answers provided.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION WITH STAFF

- 9.1 Teaching and non-teaching staff were invited to attend consultations regarding the Comhairle's proposals. Furthermore, interviews were held with former staff of Eriskay Primary School who had commenced employment at Daliburgh School in August 2013. The interviews were held on 9th October 2013.
- 9.2 Staff were asked if they had any comments about the proposed closure of Eriskay Primary School. They all stated that the move had happened very quickly at the end of the last session. There were a number of advantages of a swift transition and most staff felt that the pupils had benefited from this. Staff also commented on the positive impact of other joint arrangements, which had been in place via the shared headship. For example, pupils from Eriskay School had attended the athletic club at Daliburgh, prior to the move in August. Consequently, they knew other pupils and staff before the pre-arranged transition days.
- 9.3 Staff felt that Eriskay was an excellent school with a substantial history. They were concerned that every effort should be maintained in the first year and subsequent years to make sure that special community events, previously led by the school in the community, should continue. Events such as Christmas Carols, for example, should continue if at all possible, with pupils from Daliburgh returning to the Eriskay Community Hall to perform.

- 9.4 Staff had no comments to make on the proposal document. There was some concern that the old school building at Eriskay should be used and that decisions should not be delayed in its future. It should not be left to fall into a state of disrepair. It was stated that the planned developments in Eriskay shop, with European funding, could be considered as a possible joint project, involving the school building. It was hoped that there would be a 'celebration' event at some appropriate time; one in which the history of the school would be recognised and which could inform the public and members of the community. It would be good if this included film footage and other archive materials.
- 9.5 Further interviews were also held with other staff who had been working at Daliburgh School prior to August 2013. The interviews were held on 9th October 2013. The staff stated that children from Eriskay Primary School had settled well into Daliburgh School. Most pupils enjoyed existing friendships with other pupils that had developed through their participation in community and sports activities. As the transfer had happened at the beginning of the school year, in August, the transition appeared to be smooth. There had been no detrimental impact on the other children. As there had been inter-school activities and staff joint working, this had assisted the transfer of pupils.
- 9.6 There will be a reduction in the number of staff required. However, current workforce planning, inclusive of VER, opportunities for redeployment, retraining, short-term contracts and discussions with unions are in place to ensure that, where possible, the Comhairle operate within a no-redundancy situation.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- 10.1 The financial information included in this proposal document has been developed using guidance arising from the 'Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education' published in April 2013. The total costs comprise the following headings.
- Employee Costs;
 - Building Costs;
 - School Operational Costs;
 - Transport Costs;
 - Income;
 - Central Management Support Services;
 - Capital Cost Avoidance.
- 10.2 The Eriskay and Daliburgh costs are as indicated in the table below.

| 2013/4 Budgeted School Running Costs | |
|---|---------|
| Cost per pupil in Eriskay School (based on 9 pupils) | £16,759 |
| Cost per pupil in Daliburgh School (based on 83 pupils) | £12,506 |

- 10.3 The Comhairle, as requested by the Commission for Rural Education, has considered the impact the transfer of pupils from Eriskay School to Daliburgh School will have on GAE (Grant Aided Expenditure). The transfer to Daliburgh will result in a small reduction in the number of pupils attending what is defined as a 'small rural school' by the Scottish Government. This is one of several factors considered such as Gaelic provision and the number of free school meals registered at the school. However, there will be no effect on GAE for the Comhairle in this case as the 'Floor mechanism' ie the minimum level to which the Comhairle's funding can be reduced will cushion any reduction due to the small decrease in the percentage of pupils attending a 'small rural school'.
- 10.4 In respect of Capital expenditure, the Comhairle anticipates that approximately £157k would be required to be spent on Eriskay School to address the maintenance backlog and meet DDA requirements at the school.
- The annual school running cost per pupil is obtained by dividing the total school running cost by the school roll.
 - The pupil numbers are based on the Scottish Government census return from September 2012.
 - The running costs are based on the financial model developed by COSLA following guidance issued by the Commission on Rural Education.

| Eriskay School 2013/14 | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| DESCRIPTION | ANNUAL COSTS |
| Employee Costs | £99,664 |
| Building Costs | £17,961 |
| School Operational Costs | £9,582 |
| Transport Costs | £269 |
| Income | -£821 |
| Central Management Support Costs | £24,184 |
| TOTAL RUNNING COSTS | £150,839 |
| Number of Pupils | 9 |
| COST PER PUPIL | £16,759 |

| Daliburgh School 2013/14 | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| DESCRIPTION | ANNUAL COSTS |
| TOTAL RUNNING COSTS | £1,038,067 |
| Number of Pupils | 83 |
| COST PER PUPIL | £12,506 |

CONCLUSION

- 11.1 Throughout this consultation the Comhairle has given special regard to the provisions for rural schools within Section 12 of the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010,
- 11.2 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'.
- 11.3 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.
- 11.4 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)
- 11.5 Education Scotland HMI officers visited Daliburgh School to speak to parents, pupils and staff. They also had the opportunity to review in detail the proposal document and all written responses.
- 11.6 In summary, the Education Scotland (HMI) Report recognises the merits of the closure proposal. The HMI report states that, "The proposal from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to close Eriskay Primary School and change the catchment area of Daliburgh School to include Eriskay Primary School offers some clear educational benefits to the children directly affected by the proposal and more widely across the council. The learning environment offered at the new school in Daliburgh provides high standard accommodation from which children have benefited. During this time, the children have also benefited from access to a broader range of learning opportunities and from working together with children of a similar age and stage in paired, group and team activities. As part of its ongoing approaches to improving the quality of education at Daliburgh School, the council should ensure that the quality of children's learning experiences and achievements at the school continue to improve.

- 11.7 The HMI report provides evidence that the proposal to close Eriskay Primary School and change the catchment area of Daliburgh has a number of educational benefits. It notes that the arrangements will support the;
- Effective delivery of *Curriculum for Excellence*.
 - Effective use of resources – financial, staffing and estate.
 - Education of pupils in buildings fit for the 21st Century.
- 11.9 The Director of Education and Children’s Services, on reviewing all of the submissions, the Education Scotland report and the Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix C) recommends that the best and most sustainable educational provision for the current catchment area of Eriskay Primary School would be provided at Daliburgh School and that the education provision should be discontinued at Eriskay Primary School from 14 August 2014.
- 11.10 The Director of Education and Children’s Services recommends that a transfer of pupils from Eriskay to Daliburgh 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 wider range of expertise due to the greater number of staff, 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.
- 11.11 Pupils and parents of Eriskay 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 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.
- 11.12 The proposal will result in pupils at Eriskay School attending a building that is modern and better designed for the delivery of a 21st Century curriculum.
- 11.13 The closure of Eriskay School will both improve efficiency of the school estate and enable investment in education and provide a better educational experience for pupils.

RECOMMENDATION

- 12.1 It is recommended that;
- Eriskay Primary School be closed with effect from 27 June 2014.
 - That the pupils of Eriskay Primary School continue their education at Daliburgh School, from 14 August 2014.
 - That the catchment area of Daliburgh School be extended to include the current catchment area of Eriskay Primary School.