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Review of Education Provision
at
LIONEL SCHOOL (S1-2)
Isle of Lewis

CONSULTATION REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2010

Roinn an Fhoghlaim is Seirbheisean Chloinne

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Review of Education Provision
CONSULTATION REPORT FOR LIONEL SCHOOL (S1-2)
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Review of Education Provision at Lionel School, Isle of Lewis Consultation Report

Report by Director of Education and Children's Services

CONSIDER THE PROPOSAL THAT :

- **The S1/2 education provision at Lionel School be discontinued with effect from 29 June 2012**
- **That the pupils of S1/2 at Lionel School continue their education at The Nicolson Institute, from 16 August 2012**

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 Lionel School (S1-2) 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 Lionel 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 Tuesday, 15 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 Lionel School on 15 June 2010.
- Meetings with staff at both Lionel School and The Nicolson Institutes were held separately.
- Meetings with pupils at both Lionel School and The Nicolson Institutes 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. In paragraph 10.1 of the Proposal Document Lionel School 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.

REPRESENTATIONS

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

Representations from:	Number
• Individual Representations (23 with 2 signatures)	114
• Community Council	1
• Voluntary Organisation	2
• Parent Councils	4
• Staff Professional Associations	2
• Bòrd na Gàidhlig	1
• NHS Western Isles	1
• Fire Service	1
• Alasdair Allan, MSP	2
• Angus M MacNeil MP	1
Total:	129

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.

TRAVEL

ISSUE: A significant number of concerns were raised in relation to travel of S1-2 pupils from Lionel to The Nicolson Institute. These included: distance, time, pupil fatigue, impact on academic performance, vulnerability of some children, quality of school transport, reduction in walking/cycling to school, mental well-being, stress, ability to do homework, loss of extra-curricular activities, impact on social relationships and reduced family time.

RESPONSE

- Lionel School is approximately 27 miles from The Nicolson Institute. 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 30 minutes on a bus or Secondary pupils more than 60 minutes. 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 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.
- In order to ensure compliance with this policy and to reduce the journey time to within the hour, the following action is being taken:
 - an additional coach is to be employed;
 - the Comhairle is currently making road improvements at Manor roundabout to provide a two-lane approach to the roundabout thereby reducing queue time and speeding up the throughput of traffic;
 - when this work is completed, traffic lights will be installed at the Laxdale Bridge, ensuring a more efficient throughput of traffic
- The morning journey to The Nicolson Institute will start at 07.44 and will arrive at The Nicolson Institute at 08.40. The afternoon journey will start at The Nicolson Institute at 3.45pm and arrive in Ness at 4.43pm. Both journeys are within the one hour criteria as described in the policy.
- 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. In some cases where concerns have been raised regarding passenger behaviour, buses have been fitted with CCTV cameras.
- To access after school clubs, pupils are issued with passes which can be used on regular scheduled transport at designated pick up points.
- In addition, after-school activities will also continue to be supported in local communities.
- Numbers on buses are subject to regulation and the transport manager ensures that overloads are dealt with by the provision of extra capacity, through additional transport.
- Numbers of pupils on buses do not exceed the stated capacity.
- 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 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 light of recent community conversations, it is necessary to consider a review of the integrated service versus dedicated school transport.
- 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.
- 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 is with a view to encouraging and supporting local communities to develop and use local resources for recreational, learning and other community uses. A stage 2 European Social Fund application has currently been submitted.
- It is important to note that S3-6 pupils have been undertaking this journey for many years, and have coped not only with its physical demands, but with the academic, social and recreational demands.
- 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.
- If this proposal is implemented the Comhairle recognises that enhanced transport provision is required for pupils to access education at The Nicolson Institute. Consequently there would be some negative environmental impact. However the Comhairle aspires to achieve a BREEAM excellent rating for the new Nicolson Institute. BREEAM is the leading and most widely used environmental assessment method for buildings. It sets the standard for best practice in sustainable design and has become the de facto measure used to describe a building's environmental performance.

ISSUE: A significant level of concern was expressed in relation to mental wellbeing and travel. These included tiredness, long day, bullying, stress, impact on homework, etc.

RESPONSE:

- The Comhairle and parents agree that there are a number of shared concerns. These include a longer school day and the possibility of reduced opportunities for family time.
- 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:
 - Providing a good quality bus
 - Competent and friendly driver
 - Shortest route possible
 - Exercise before school
 - Travelling on school rather than public buses

- This time is often used by young people to make friends, enjoy time together, making them more resistant to bullying, either through the support of friends or through adult presence. Some use the time to be better organised, become more independent and take more responsibility for themselves. In addition, many children use this time to listen to music, read, and or interact with others.
- 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, for S3-6 pupils.
- The Comhairle will continue to provide transportation that meets all contract specifications and which ensures safe travel for all its pupils.

OTHER VIABLE OPTIONS

ISSUE: Could itinerant teachers from The Nicolson Institute or elsewhere provide specialist subject inputs on the basis of satellite schools; could e-learning opportunities be developed, or could an S1-3 school be provided in the Westside of Lewis?

RESPONSE:

- In August 2008 the Education Committee considered a report by David Alexander, Education Consultant (Appendix E), which looked at a number of options in relation to school provision with regard to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), finances and educational provision. The report also considered the upgrade of all S1-2 schools to S1-3. This included a calculation of staffing and resources which would enable the delivery of the fourth level of CfE. The options presented were as follows:
 - a) maintain the status quo.
This option does not provide educationally beneficial class groupings which would enrich the learning experiences.
 - b) extend the provision to S1-S3.
It was not considered that an S1-3 school with 100 pupils is a viable option and it does not provide continuity and progression in the educational experience. Teaching staff would not have the opportunity to work with young people through to the senior phase of CfE. Consequently, examination of this option concluded that, despite carrying substantial additional costs, this option would not provide the best educational provision and could affect the attainment of pupils on transfer to S4-6.
Additionally, the Comhairle does not, within its current budgetary provision, have the capacity to either develop, staff or resource such extended provision.
 - c) extend the provision to S1-S6.
This option does not provide educationally beneficial class groupings which would enrich the learning experiences. The Comhairle does not within its current budgetary provision have the capacity to either develop, staff or resource such extended provision.
These options are therefore not considered to be viable.
- The community consultations raised interesting alternatives which the Education and Children's Services Department are giving serious consideration to in relation to hub and satellite educational provision:
 - There is opportunity to ensure that aspects of learning - e.g. vocational learning, history, biology, etc - could be studied in the context of local communities. Resources within the community may also provide an input to the curriculum;

- E-learning provides a mechanism whereby satellite learning experiences could be enhanced through connection with the hub. However, this model is not sustainable as the primary mechanism for delivering comprehensive secondary education but could offer benefits for community based learning within the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence.
- S1-2 schools do share itinerant staff with The Nicolson Institute and other S1-2 schools. A secondary timetable delivered by itinerant staff and offering a wide range of specialist subjects could not be sustained in terms of timetabling arrangements. If this was adopted as a model, it would be uneconomic and inefficient, and would result in a lot of class-contact time being spent travelling between schools.
- The part-time transfer of pupils from Lionel School to The Nicolson Institute would be unmanageable in terms of staffing and timetabling arrangements, as this would create capacity in the host school and demand in the receiving school. This would not be an effective or efficient use of specialist resources.

FINANCE

ISSUE: A number of issues were raised in relation to finance including catering costs.

- RESPONSE:**
- The total Education budget is approximately £44 million. The total school estate review savings are estimated at approximately £2 million. The projected savings in relation to the discontinuation of the S1-2 provision at Lionel School are approximately £245k.
 - All costs are based on projections from current school rolls, class groupings and utility and service costs. At this stage, all costs are approximate and the Comhairle's HR strategy is being implemented to ensure a planned workforce reduction.
 - The Lionel Secondary School pupil costs for **2009/10** are shown in the following table along with the relevant comparators.

Detail	Amount
Scottish Average	£5,437
Western Isles Secondary School Average	£7,674
The Nicolson Institute	£5,693
Lionel School (S1/2)	£10,123

- As will be observed, the average costs per pupil within the Western Isles are higher than the Scottish average in any year. When comparing the relevant costs, due to the small numbers, the cost per pupil for Lionel Secondary School is substantially higher than the figures for the potential receiving school and is higher than the average for the Western Isles.
All of the above calculations are based on the census figures which are collected in September each year and are therefore frequently different from pupil roll figures we produce at other times of the year.

- 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.

Lionel Sec School 2010	
DESCRIPTION	TOTAL BUDGET
Employee Expenses	336,568
Premises Related Expenditure	19,401
Utilities Related Expenditure	16,558
Resources Related Expenditure	11,271
Transport Related Expenditure	25,630
Catering Related Expenditure	30,183
Net Expenditure	439,611
Parent Council Funding	551
TOTAL	440,162
Number of Pupils	42
COST PER PUPIL	10,480

- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's financial accounts are subject to external audit on an annual basis.

LODGINGS

ISSUES: At the community conversation the provision of lodgings was raised as a possible option to be considered. However, this was a concern to many parents and an area that the Education and Children's Services Department had to consider.

RESPONSE

- The Comhairle has, through its Home to School Travel Policy, ensured that all pupils in the Western Isles are able to remain at home and can travel to school on a daily basis.
- No pupil affected by this proposal will be expected to travel in excess of one hour.

THE NEW NICOLSON INSTITUTE AND TRANSFER ARRANGEMENTS ISSUES

ISSUES: Children's access to the town centre caused concerns in relation to less healthy eating, nuisance behaviour and peer group influences.

RESPONSE

- In response to these concerns, the Department has indicated its willingness to undertake a consultation with parents in order to agree that pupils in S1 and S2 will not be allowed to leave the school premises over lunchtime, unless their parents have requested this in writing.
- Health and wellbeing is given significant priority in all school curricula in the Western Isles. All schools meet health promoting criteria and school meals comply with National Nutritional Guidelines.
- The new Nicolson Institute canteen will accommodate all pupils who wish to use the facilities.
- The Department accepts that pupils have a choice and can exercise that choice, e.g. subject to parental consent, pupils can choose to visit and eat in the town centre. The promotion of healthy life choices is a shared responsibility between children, parents and school.

- All S1-6 secondary schools use an electronic-based behaviour monitoring and attendance system which is recorded by staff on a period by period basis. Incident Manager provides a mechanism to log any issue of concern regarding pupil behaviour, and all of this data is available to all staff, as required.
- Consistent with other school-based security initiatives, the NI operates Groupcall, CCTV around the campus, and period-by-period registration. Door entry security will be in operation in the new school.
- The new Nicolson Institute campus will comprise enhanced school transport facilities incorporating a bus turning loop system, whilst also achieving a closer drop-off in relation to the main school building

ISSUE: Concern was expressed regarding potential bullying in The Nicolson Institute

RESPONSE

- Unfortunately, bullying can occur in any school of any size and is more frequently a factor associated with the individuals and social relationships within groups of children, rather than with a particular size of school. Clearly, the bigger the school, the more likely it is that there could be incidents. Procedures are in place in all schools, to ensure early identification and intervention, in the event of such incidents.
- Fortunately, all children in the Western Isles benefit from living in rural communities with a strong sense of community identity and engagement. There is no evidence that children in S1/2 schools are any "more innocent" than children of a similar age, stage or ability in S1-6 schools.

ISSUES: Concern was expressed with regard to support for pupils, pastoral care, Additional Support Needs and training and support for staff.

RESPONSE

- Pupils are visible and cared for in all Western Isles schools.
- The ASN legislation provides a mechanism to ensure that any barrier to learning can be identified as an additional support need. All schools in the Western Isles operate staged levels of intervention and have in place appropriate inputs to address needs.
- HMIe inspections of almost all schools in the Western Isles highlight a good standard of personal and social support to young people.
- All teaching staff, irrespective of the size of the school, have an annual professional development and review interview with their line manager. The outcome of this review, together with the school and departmental business plan, is used for the planning of appropriate CPD for staff.
- The Education and Children's Services Department operates to a robust set of quality improvement procedures and guidance. These procedures require all schools to undertake the following quality assurance activities:
 - that all teachers have appropriate plans;
 - that monitoring of classroom observations take place;
 - that cross-checking of pupils' work is carried out;
 - that pupils' jotters are checked regularly; and
 - that appropriate teaching methodologies are used.
- On this basis, the Education and Children's Services Department is confident that it is maintaining high standards of professional competence across all schools.
- The Nicolson Institute has the facilities to cater for the needs of all children, including those with additional support needs. At present there are 7 full time equivalent Additional Support Needs teachers who provide flexible and direct support to teaching staff and pupils. The enhanced facilities in the new school will also help to enhance learning and teaching for all children who have additional support needs.

ATTAINMENT

ISSUES: A number of issues were raised in relation to attainment, focusing on a perception that S1-2 attainment in The Nicolson Institute is not as good as in the S1-2 schools; anxiety that not all pupils' needs are met in The Nicolson Institute.

RESPONSE

- The NI represents approximately 60% of the secondary population of the Western Isles. The Nicolson Institute's attainment is good and achievement for certificate exams matches or exceeds comparator authority performance profiles.
- 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 the viability of schools, 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 Lionel S1-2 provision with The Nicolson Institute 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.
- There is no evidence that pupils across the ability range do not have their needs met within The Nicolson Institute.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

ISSUES: Many parents felt that Lionel had adequate ICT resources comparable with that available in The Nicolson Institute.

RESPONSE

- Lionel School currently has access to a wireless network, interactive whiteboards, and classroom in a box. The new NI however will be fully equipped to address the IT specification necessary for delivering 21st century education, e.g. teaching walls, etc.
- The Nicolson Institute (New Build) will have the following ICT facilities:
 - Modern school/classroom design and layout, including teaching walls, etc.
 - Comfortable, air-conditioned, teaching and learning environment.
 - Easy and safe campus-wide access for all able-bodied and wheelchair users (staff, pupils, parents and visitors).
 - Modern and safe signage information system for all able-bodied and disabled users/visitors.
 - The Nicolson Institute (because of location) will have a direct fibre cable (fast) broadband link to the Local Authority Hub.
 - Modern Local Area Network (LAN) with intelligent, managed switch technology.
 - Highly secure and safe data infrastructure (along data backup facilities) for all staff and pupils.
 - Gigabyte network speed to the user desktop.
 - Both hard wire and wireless connectivity options to all teaching areas.
 - Internet Protocol Telephony (IPT) for unified data, voice and video communications
 - Fit for purpose user tools (PC, Laptops, Netbooks, etc) and software.
 - Multi-function, full colour, print-copy-scan, networked devices.
 - Modern, fully-height adjustable, interactive-smartboards.
 - No TV sets in the new schools, instead, educational video and TV programmes will be available on-demand over the school network to all classroom Interactive SmartBoards, users' PCs, laptops, etc.
 - Video conferencing over the school network and out to other sites, schools, museums, modern language Depts, Gaelic Depts, colleges, universities, etc.
- It should also be noted that The Nicolson Institute have qualified staff to deliver ICT courses at S1 and S2.

Gaelic

ISSUES: A number of concerns were raised regarding the relative strength of Gaelic in Lionel as compared to The Nicolson Institute.

RESPONSE

- Currently, pupils in Lionel who are fluent in Gaelic receive oral instruction in Technical and Home Economics classes. In the Nicolson Institute, pupils who are fluent in Gaelic will receive Gaelic Medium teaching in Social Subjects, Business Studies and Home Economics, Gaelic Digital Media, PSE, Rich Task Activities and will receive oral instruction in Science. In Media Studies classes, there is an opportunity to produce work in Gaelic, although the instruction is in English.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR AND COMMUNITY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

ISSUES: This was an area of significant concern to a lot of parents, worried (a) that children would not be able to participate in after-school activities; (b) about how would they get home; and (c) about the implications for after-school activities in the local community.

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 will normally make arrangements for children to get passes on the service bus, or where possible, provide other transport.
- After school activities will also continue to be supported through Community Education, Sport and Health and the Voluntary Sector in local communities.
- 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 is with a view to encouraging and supporting local communities to develop and use local resources for recreational, learning and other community uses. A stage 2 European Social Fund application has currently been submitted.
- The Education and Children's Services Department accepts that there is a close relationship between community partners and the school. Lionel School is not closing and secondary age pupils from the Ness area will continue to return to their community after school. On this basis, there is no reason to assume that the transfer of S1-2 pupils to The Nicolson Institute would have a significant impact on the use of community resources.

ISSUES: There was also concern that the closure of S1-2 would result in the reduction in participation in the Mod and rural sports competitions.

RESPONSE

- Rural sports and participation in the Mods will continue for all primary pupils. S1-2 rural sports and participation in Mods will stop if there are no S1-2 schools. However, all children from rural areas, on transfer to The Nicolson Institute, will continue to have the opportunity to compete in sports and Mods, at both a local and national level.

CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE

ISSUES: Many in the community and some teachers believe that CfE can be delivered in an S1-2 school.

RESPONSE

- Elements of CfE could be and are delivered in S1-2 schools. However, S1-2 schools with a small cohort of under 50 pupils do not provide the opportunities for reasonable groupings of young people to experience progression, breadth, choice and personalisation in learning, within a meaningful learning environment.
- S1-2 schools could provide a limited level 4 experience. The fragmentation that this would provide in terms of learning groupings or placements would be extremely costly and inefficient. This would result in some young people having to transfer to the NI in order to work at an appropriate level with an appropriate group, or, in some other areas, this could result in young people having a limited experience.
- With 114 pupils in S2 and over 80 staff, compared to 27 pupils in S2 and 6 staff at Lionel, The Nicolson Institute provides greater choice in curricular areas, flexibility in learning and personalisation in choice for individuals.
- Lionel School, with a limited number of pupils and fewer staff, provides less flexibility, personalisation and choice.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

ISSUES: Some concern was expressed in relation to consultation opportunities for staff, councillors and whether parents of children in The Nicolson Institute had been consulted as to whether they would wish their children to be educated in smaller schools.

RESPONSE

- Staff and pupils were consulted in line with statutory legislation.
- The Elected Members at the public meeting indicated that they were in attendance to hear the views of their community but would not provide an opinion until they had considered all of the information that would be included within the consultation report.
- Parents of children in The Nicolson Institute were not consulted on placement in smaller schools, as this was not an option considered within the schools estate review. The Education and Children's Services Department, as part of the consultation process, undertook a number of community conversations, in order to give all communities and island groups within the Western Isles, an opportunity to express their views on education provision. There was no support from the Stornoway area for children to be educated in a school other than The Nicolson Institute.

IMPACT ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

ISSUES: A number of concerns were raised in relation to the possible impact on the community if the school were to close. These included concerns about the school as the hub of the community being necessary for attracting people to live in the community and having an impact on economic potential.

RESPONSE

- Over a period of 30 years, where there has been significantly more schools than at present and where there has been an ongoing annual decline in the pupil population, there is no evidence within the Western Isles, that having a school in a community, increases inward migration. With the improved road infrastructure in the islands there is evidence that people's choice of where to live is determined by factors, other than the presence of a school.

- The decline in population is not always greater in communities where schools have already closed. In some communities, the population has increased, despite the closure of the local school.
- All of our schools are designated very remote rural schools. The 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. The discontinuation of the S1/S2 provision at Lionel School would not significantly impact on the identified key factors needed for sustainable communities.
- In light of issues raised at the consultation regarding migration and community viability, a European Social Fund (ESF) application supporting community regeneration and economic development, targeting young people, has been developed and is currently being considered at stage 2.
- The School Estate Review does not seek to remove schools from rural communities but seeks to provide schools which 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.
- A school is only one of a number of services in any community and, like any other service, it can only exist where there is a viable demand. Service provision in a community more frequently reflects the demands placed upon it by demographics, population and the economy.

PARENTAL CHOICE

ISSUES: Some parents were concerned that the removal of S1-2 removed parental choice for secondary education in Lewis.

RESPONSE

- The legislation provides the opportunity for parental choice. However, in the remote and rural setting of the Western Isles, and due to the low level of school population, there are insufficient numbers to support a second S1-6 school in Lewis. It should be noted that all young people in Lewis attend The Nicolson Institute for their S3-6 years.
- The School Estate Review is designed to enhance educational provision, although it is recognised that, at S1 and S2, there will be less choice for parents.

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 Lionel School (S1-2) and the transfer of pupils to The Nicolson Institute. This report is attached as Appendix D.

7.2 The Report also identifies issues for consideration by the Comhairle as follows.

HMIe REPORT	
ISSUE:	The Comhairle should assess the impact on pupils' health and wellbeing and family life in relation to the additional travel which would be necessary.
RESPONSE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 - Travelling on school rather than public buses • This time is often used by young people to make friends, enjoy time together, making them more resistant to bullying, either through the support of friends or through adult presence. Some use the time to be better organised, become more independent and take more responsibility for themselves. In addition, many children use this time to listen to music, read, interact with others, and use their experiences in learning. • On this basis, the Education and Children's Services Department has ensured that there are good buses on the route, competent drivers, and pupils travelling from the same area together. All of these factors are reinforced within service contracts and have proved to be effective over many years for S3-6 pupils. • The Comhairle will continue to provide transportation that meets all contract specifications and which ensures safe travel for all its 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. • The Education and Children's Services Department has reviewed the issues raised in relation to transportation and health and wellbeing in terms of travel and after-school activities. In addition to the above, the Comhairle is making the following improvements to the route which will reduce travel time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improvements to travel arrangements. - Improvements at Manor roundabout and Laxdale Bridge. • The travel time from the Ness area to The Nicolson Institute will be within the Comhairle's Home to School Travel Policy of 1 hour. • The Education and Children's Services Department will continue to work with parents to monitor the effects of the travel arrangements. 	
ISSUE:	The Comhairle should fully explore possibilities, costs and benefits, in consultation with community learning and development, sport and health and the voluntary sector, for providing after-school activities in local areas.
RESPONSE:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In light of issues raised at the consultation regarding migration and community viability a European Social Fund (ESF) 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 Comhairle should fully explore alternative options and further clarify its financial calculations for the proposal to assure stakeholders about transparency.

RESPONSE:

- The Education and Children's Services Department has reviewed its financial calculations on pupil costs which are included within the consultation report.

ISSUE: If secondary provision is retained at Lionel School beyond 2012 it is likely that there will be implications for the Comhairle's proposals to discontinue S1/S2 secondary provision at Shawbost School, Isle of Lewis.

RESPONSE:

- In August 2008 the Education Committee considered a report by David Alexander, Education Consultant (Appendix E), which looked at a number of options in relation to school provision with regard to CfE, finances and educational provision including consideration that the status quo remain. If the Comhairle's proposals to discontinue the S1-2 provision at Shawbost is implemented and if the S1-2 provision at Lionel School is retained, the report shows this would not provide the best educational provision and would carry substantial additional costs. This would affect the attainment of pupils on transfer to The Nicolson Institute.
- However a secondary timetable which could only be implemented by itinerant staff being shared between The Nicolson Institute and Lionel School is not sustainable in terms of timetabling arrangements.
- If this were adopted as a model, it would be inefficient, very expensive and would result in a lot of class-contact time being spent travelling between schools.

ISSUE: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar 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.
- The revised Department Gaelic Plan has specific initiatives designed to increase the retention rate in primary and to encourage greater participation and take-up in secondary.
- The development of a Gaelic school, primary or secondary, will continue to be considered and consultations in relation to a primary provision are currently being consulted on for the Stornoway area. There is no evidence available at the current time, which would indicate that there is support for the establishment of a stand-alone Gaelic school.
- S1-6 secondary schools will be a major focus in the revised Gaelic Plan. This will take account of local and national Gaelic plan aspirations to significantly extend the number of subjects being taught through the medium of Gaelic, up to certificate level.
- The Education and Children's Services Department is committed to working with Bòrd Na Gàidhlig.

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 Lionel School (S1-2) Pupils

Benefits:

- We might make new friends
- We might learn more things
- We might get to go to the shops
- We would have more teachers
- We would be older
- There might be better Education
- You would get more choice in Education
- You would get on different trips
- You would get more time to speak to your friends in the travel time

Issues of Concern

- There is nothing good about the S1/2 going to the Nicolson Institute
- A big waste of fuel
- The bus is already overflowing
- It is a long journey
- We would have to wake up early
- What would happen if you were sick?
- You would be too tired to work
- You would get more work at an earlier age
- We are not ready
- You might have no friends
- It is not as good an Education as Lionel
- We are too young
- Burn more fuel
- We can't walk or cycle to school
- Some people feel sick on the bus
- The work might be harder
- It is a long bus drive
- We might get lost
- There is a lot of peer pressure
- Adult and pupil behaviour on the bus is not always good
- You are not really prepared at our age
- You might lose friends
- Travelling is too long in the morning and the bus is totally crammed
- You will be too tired and it will affect your concentration
- S5/6 might pick on you
- It will affect your life
- You will get fat going to the chippy everyday
- If you go to the shops older people will not like that
- You don't get to cycle or walk to school
- You can't get to your friends houses after school
- Your brothers and sister will miss you

RESPONSE:

These issues were discussed with the pupils and, where possible, answers were provided. All pupils were advised that trips, sports and the Mod competitions would all continue and they would have the opportunity for participation.

Areas where we might help

- Don't send us there
- Put us all in the same class
- Stop people from going down the town
- Just leave Lionel school alone
- Make the school bus trip shorter

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:

- Did I want the school to close? Why?
- They wanted it to be clear that they felt Lionel is a good school
- How would they report bullying in the Nicolson?
- When will the Nicolson Institute be built and will it be ready on time?
- Do they get a vote?
- The implications of travel.

RESPONSE:

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

Summary of Consultation with The Nicolson Institute Pupils as the receiving School**Benefits**

- More subject choices;
- Wider range of subjects;
- More access to practical subjects;
- Better equipment;
- More experienced teachers;
- Good teachers;
- New teachers;
- More activities after school;
- More fun;
- Bigger pool of people to make friends with;
- More time to develop relationships with pupils from all over the island;
- More choice at lunch time;
- No need for two secondary schools and two transitions;
- Earlier move to the Nicolson would be beneficial;
- Help to focus on career choices;
- Greater opportunities for independence.

Issues of Concern

- Longer bus journeys;
- Far from home in case of an emergency;
- Fewer leadership opportunities for S2 pupils in bigger school;
- Fewer chances for S1/2 pupils of participating in activities in bigger school;
- Fewer opportunities to demonstrate independence at S1/2 stage;
- Less 1-1 attention;
- Pupils out of 'comfort zone';
- Pupils apprehensive because of size of school and numbers of pupils;
- Concerns about bullying;
- Loneliness in new surroundings;
- Problems caused by sudden change from smaller school to bigger school;

- Particular problems for shy pupils in bigger classes;
- Unfamiliar with age range of pupils;
- Unable to find way around building;
- Lack of familiarity with staff;
- Missing staff/pupil relationships in smaller school.

RESPONSE:

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

Areas where we might help

- Longer transition;
- Teachers to attend transition days along with pupils;
- NI teachers go out to S1/2 schools for Meet the Teacher Days;
- NI pupils visit the S1/2 schools;
- NI teachers go into S1/2 schools and deliver classes in previous session;
- Buddies to be in place, in own year group rather than from senior classes;
- Ensure equal spread of rural pupils throughout NI classes;
- Use Activities to ensure pupils mix;
- Pupils to be shown round by previous S3 class;
- Entertainment on buses to alleviate boredom/trouble during travel time;
- Detailed maps of school provided for new pupils;
- Quiet place available for pupils to go if feeling isolated;
- More homework on P7 to prepare pupils for change

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 felt the documents are one sided in favour of closure
- As parents they felt that parental choice was being removed and not one parent has made a placing request out of Lionel
- In relation to Educational advantage the staff did not believe there was any
- Rich tasks within Lionel they believe gave choice to young people
- Staff felt that there was a strong pastoral care system in the S1/2 schools
- Staff felt concerned that where pupils would be ill in school, how would they get home?
- ICT facilities in Lionel equal to any school and are better than the Nicolson
- Staff felt that there was strong links with the community
- The Nicolson has a strong emphasis in certification. However, Lionel in addition to a strong track record in learning and teaching they felt that there was community input in P1 through to secondary and strong curriculum, extra curricular and business involvement
- Between August and June there were only 3 pupils who chose none of the extra curricular activities
- Local youth clubs support the school in supporting all capacities of Curriculum for Excellence
- All young people in Lionel participate in extra-curricular activities. However, on transfer to the Nicolson a significant reduction in enrolments occur.
- A significant level of engagement by local youth clubs with CfE through dynamic youth awards and emphasis on volunteering
- All school trips are inclusive to the whole school

- Staff have concerns that the emphasis on Gaelic is weaker in the Nicolson and in this years mod there was no representation from the Nicolson in key areas
- Staff feel that travel would be tiring and have a significant impact on learning, given that
- young people's working day would be from 7.30am to 5pm
- They believe Spors Nis and the Clan MacQuarrie provided outstanding sports facilities and provide a significant advantage to the community enabling all young people participation on an intergenerational basis. Sports achievements in Lionel have resulted in young people participating in National Levels in Badminton and Swimming. They have strong representation in the inter school competition and they believe that with the loss of the S1/2's there would be a reduction in the rural school sports
- Staff feel that the Education benefit statement is one sided and is not evidenced.
- Staff have concerns that if the secondary provision is transferred to Stornoway there may be migration to the Stornoway area
- Staff have concerns of the security on buses
- Staff have asked the unit costs in staffing be reviewed
- Prior to the consultation, staff had a brainstorming activity in which the following list of key issues were identified: Community links; CfE more easily delivered; Spors Nis Facilities; Children arriving fresh and ready to learn; children can walk to school and there 100% school meal uptake; strong Gaelic ethos throughout the school; success of pupils in extra curricular activities; more pupils involved in sport, mod etc; science competition; close and open relationships between staff and parents; more opportunities for personalisation in choice; cross curricular links are well cultivated; primary/secondary cross sector working; junior feis.

The staff at the Nicolson Institute made the following observations which they wished to be recorded.

- Fairer distribution of resources
- Single transition for pupils – better socially for pupils
- Possibility that Nicolson would receive additional staff
- Some staff could be eligible for early retirement
- Incoming pupils would benefit from greater choice
- In the interim period, only fixed term contracts available for vacancies - this could deter some high calibre candidates from applying
- The interim period, especially session 2011-12, will be a period of instability in the 2 year schools - this may have a detrimental effect on pupils' education in these schools
- Incoming pupils will have long travel times - so may be tired in class
- Nicolson would be under greater scrutiny by parents of incoming pupils – could lead to complaints
- Suggestion that all pupils should be allowed to travel home on a later bus without authorisation – the requirement for each pupil to be issued with a signed pass by teachers when they remain for after school activities is currently ineffective and will be exacerbated with greater numbers
- In the interim period, staff in the 2 year schools should be given opportunities to do some teaching in the Nicolson.

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 the school 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 Lionel School (S1-2) to speak to parents, pupils and staff. They attended the public meeting on 15 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 Lionel School secondary department and transfer pupils to The Nicolson Institute with effect from August 2012, offers some educational benefits to pupils directly affected by the proposal and to the wider community of Eilean Siar. The proposal would not adversely affect the quality of education for children in The Nicolson Institute.”
- 10.7 The HMle report provides evidence that the proposal to amalgamate Lionel School (S1-2) with The Nicolson Institute 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 Gaelic Medium Education 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 discontinuation of S1-2 at Lionel 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 Lionel School (S1-2) would be provided at The Nicolson Institute and that the education provision should be discontinued at Lionel School (S1-2) from 29 June 2012.
- 10.10 The Director of Education and Children’s Services recommends that a transfer of pupils from Lionel School (S1-2) to The Nicolson Institute 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 Lionel School (S1-2) 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 Lionel School (S1-2) attending a building that is modern and better designed for the delivery of a 21st Century curriculum.
- 10.13 The closure of Lionel School (S1-2) 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 Lionel and The Nicolson Institutes to develop a transition plan that will ensure an effective transition for pupils and staff to The Nicolson Institute.

RECOMMENDATION

- 11.1 It is recommended that:

- a) the S1/S2 education provision at Lionel School be discontinued with effect from 29 June 2012; and
- b) the pupils of S1/2 at Lionel School continue their education at The Nicolson Institute, from 16 August 2012.