



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR
Education and Children's Services Department

Sandwick Road, Stornoway. HS1 2BW
Rathad Shanndabhaig, Steornabhagh. HS1 2BW

Review of Education Provision
at
PAIBLE SCHOOL (S1-2)
Isle of North Uist

CONSULTATION REPORT
FEBRUARY 2011

Roinn an Fhoghlaim is Seirbheisean Chloinne

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CONSULTATION REPORT FOR PAIBLE SCHOOL (S1-2)
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Review of Education Provision at Paible School, Isle of North Uist Consultation Report

Report by Director of Education and Children's Services

CONSIDER THE PROPOSAL THAT :

- **The S1/S2 education provision at Paible School be discontinued with effect from 29 June 2012.**
- **That the pupils of S1/2 at Paible School continue their education at Sgoil Lionacleit, from 16 August 2012.**

BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Comhairle, at its Meeting on 17 June 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 Paible 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 Paible 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 28 October 2010 and the consultation ran thereafter for a period of 31 school days until 10 December 2010.
- A public meeting was held on Monday, 8 November 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 in relation 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 Paible School on 8 November 2010.
- Meetings with staff at Paible School, Carinish School, Lochmaddy School and Sgoil Lionacleit were held separately.
- Meetings with pupils at Paible School, Carinish School, Lochmaddy School and Sgoil Lionacleit 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. The Comhairle, at its meeting on 17 June 2010 authorised the Director of Education and Children's Services to proceed to undertake the necessary consultation regarding the proposed discontinuation of S1/2 provision at Paible School with effect from 29 June 2012. The Proposal Document stated, in error, that this provision be discontinued with effect from 30 June 2011. The advertisement in the local paper repeated that error. Therefore the proposal paper was altered to reflect the decision of Comhairle and another advert was placed in the local press to reflect the amendment and the consultation period was extended by one week.

REPRESENTATIONS

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

Representations from:	Number
• Individual written representation	1
• Parent Council	0
• Staff Professional Associations	0
• Bòrd na Gàidhlig	1
• NHS Western Isles	0
• Fire Service	0
Total:	2

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
<p>ISSUE: Distance from home to Sgoil Lionacleit was raised as the only drawback to the proposal.</p> <p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • The Comhairle will look at solutions which would reduce travelling time from the furthest away areas by looking to use 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. • As a Roads Authority the Comhairle places a great importance on its roads infrastructure and tries to maintain them all to a safe standard. Regular inspections of the network are carried out by engineers.

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 Paible School (S1-2) and the transfer of pupils to Sgoil Lionacleit . This report is attached as Appendix D.

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

HMIe REPORT
<p>ISSUE: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar should continue to work with parents to allay concerns on conditions of travel and safeguarding issues.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 with.

- The integrated and dedicated transport provision does not have supervisory staff on the buses. Dedicated transport for children with additional support needs, whether taxi or buses, may have auxiliary support provided dependent on assessed needs. Where concerns have been raised regarding passenger behaviour, buses have been fitted with CCTV cameras.
- It is observed that on some routes, the adult presence on the bus has a positive effect on pupil behaviour and may reduce bullying or other nuisance behaviour. This makes travel for young people safer.

ISSUE: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar should continue to assess the likely impact of the proposed travelling arrangements on the environment and on the young people affected by them.

RESPONSE

- Paible School pupils would use the existing transport structure to access education at Sgoil Lionacleit, with the provision of an additional midi coach. Consequently, the discontinuation of S1/S2 provision at Paible School would produce a minimal negative environmental impact. Within the overall School Estate Review, the Comhairle is confident that there is a significant reduction in its carbon footprint, due to reduced and more efficient energy use.
- The distances that pupils have to travel to and from school are clearly important in any assessment of appropriate transport provision. In addition, distances of themselves have to be set in the context of road conditions, and the time that such travelling takes.
- The Comhairle will look at solutions which would reduce travelling time for pupils from the furthest away 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.
- To utilise after-school clubs, pupils are issued with passes which can be used on regular scheduled transport at designated pick-up points.
- 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.
- Although the school day would be extended, pupils who currently travel, say that travel time allows for opportunities to socialise.

ISSUE: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar should ensure transition arrangements support the social emotional and educational needs in moving from P7 to S1

RESPONSE

- The Comhairle will ensure that the effective transition arrangements which are currently in place for S2 pupils from Paible School moving to S3 in Sgoil Lionacleit will be enhanced to take account of pupils moving from P7 in Paible, Carinish and Lochmaddy Schools in to S1 in Sgoil Lionacleit.
- Transition activities will include visits by Sgoil Lionacleit staff to the relevant primary schools, primary 7 pupils from the three primary schools joining all other P7 pupils in Benbecula and South Uist for an induction week in Sgoil Lionacleit in June of each year. The induction week activities include a Parents' evening in order that parents can meet with staff. There is also a 'settling in' parents evening planned for September which enables any issues arising from the transfer to Sgoil Lionacleit to be dealt with promptly and effectively.
- Suggestions obtained through pupil consultation in all of the affected schools will be incorporated within a Transition Action Plan.

ISSUE: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar should take full account of the response submitted by Bòrd na Gàidhlig to the proposal.

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.
- Gaelic Medium Education is provided in History, Geography, Modern Studies and Home Economics at Sgoil Lionacleit. Gaelic Medium pupils are timetabled together for parts of the week and, where appropriate, pupils will be instructed through the medium of Gaelic.
- The Comhairle in recent years has seen a steady growth in its enrolment in Gaelic Medium Education. The Education and Children's Services Department's revised Gaelic Plan will set a target of at least 50% of P1 enrolments in Gaelic Medium Education over the next 3 years. This is considered realistic on the basis that many parents whose children are enrolled in Croileagan do not enrol their children in Gaelic Medium Education where their local school only provides education through the medium of English.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION WITH PUPILS

- 8.1 Dependent on the size of the school, consultation with pupils was carried out on the basis of a representative focus group and a cross section of stages or whole school. In each school the children and young people were asked to work in groups to identify:
- Benefits in bringing the schools together
 - Issues of concern
 - Areas where they felt they might need help
- 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 Paible School Pupils

Benefits:

- New friends
- More classes
- Use of the running track
- More discos
- More space
- More opportunities
- More subjects
- More activities

Issues of Concern:

- Getting lost
- The welcome from pupils
- Concerned about meeting pupils
- What bus to go on
- Lots of new teachers
- The way people will treat you
- Boring, confused, lost
- Homework
- Not knowing people

What pupils will miss from Paible School:

- Smaller classes
- Everybody knows everyone else
- Nice teachers
- Good friends
- Nice headmaster
- Short bus runs
- The food
- The class
- Knowing everyone in your class.

RESPONSE:

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

Areas where we might help

- Get people to welcome us nicely
- Give us a buddy
- Direction signs to school
- Show where the classrooms are.

RESPONSE:

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 Carinish School Pupils

Benefits:

- Wider choice of subjects
- More personal choice
- Science/electronics
- Fashion junk club
- Youth Theatre
- Meeting new pupils
- Learn German
- H.E. classes
- Woodwork/Technical

Issues of Concern:

- Lots of classes
- Getting lost
- Bullying
- Are all the teachers nice?
- Being left out
- Being made fun of
- Being persuaded to do silly things
- Teachers not getting angry when you don't sit quietly

What pupils will miss from Carinish School:

- Little homework, easy lessons
- Going from being a senior to a junior
- Less time to play
- More travel time
- Miss the teachers

- Miss some friends
- Extra help
- Miss the small school
- Knowing your way

RESPONSE:

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

Areas where we might help

- Make sure that teachers are on standby to look after them
- Having a teacher outside to welcome them

RESPONSE:

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 Lochmaddy School Pupils

Benefits:

- More people my age because all my friends are younger than me.
- More friends
- New teachers
- Small school
- Bigger playground
- It's big but it's small

Issues of Concern:

- Not making any friends
- Not being able to find my way around
- Bullies
- Getting lost
- Getting more homework
- Getting on the wrong bus

What pupils will miss from Lochmaddy School:

- All the teachers
- Friends
- Toast & Fruit
- The toys
- The cook
- The staff
- Books

RESPONSE:

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

Areas where we might help

- Get someone to help you around
- Get teachers to give you a map
- Put signs up
- Make it more fun

RESPONSE:

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 Sgoil Lionacleit Pupils as the receiving School

Benefits

- Pupils won't have to transfer school twice if they were in Carinish/Lochmaddy schools.
- Pupils will get to know more people earlier
- More things to do at break and after school
- Make new friends, bigger classes, getting new teachers
- More subject choices
- More sporting activities

Issues of Concern

- Harder work and not knowing people
- The size of the school, getting lost
- Going on the wrong bus
- All the work they might get
- Not knowing anyone in their class, getting to know teachers

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

Areas where we might help

- More induction days (maybe a week)
- Events to allow pupils to meet Lionacleit pupils
- Make sure they know what buses and classes to go to
- Show them round the school
- S6 showing them to classes in first week
- Pair them up with an older pupil (buddies)

RESPONSE:
 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.

Paible School Staff

- A general acceptance amongst staff that S1/S2 provision would come to an end. This was also reflected in the poor turnout at the Public Meeting on 8th November.
- Small secondary roll was becoming unviable.
- Sad to see the end in sight.
- Hope and desire that no staff should lose their jobs.

Carinish School Staff

- Some members of staff expressed the view that the community had accepted that the S1/2 provision at Paible would cease in Aug. 2011.
- Staff felt that it was inevitable that the secondary at Paible would close because of the small number of pupils in North Uist on Primary 6, and Primary 7.

Lochmaddy School Staff

- An acceptance that S1/S2 was coming to an end.
- S1/S2 roll very small and some Lochmaddy pupils have in the past submitted placing requests for Sgoil Lionacleit at the end of P7.

Sgoil Lionacleit Staff

- No objection to Paible pupils transferring to Lionacleit.
- Classes were very small in Paible due to the decreasing role and there was no likelihood of this situation changing.
- Sad to see the end in sight but inevitable.
- Concern over the position of itinerant teachers who serve both Paible and Lionacleit. It was, however, noted that the proposal document says that itinerant staff would be given revised timetables.

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 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 Paible School (S1-2) to speak to parents, pupils and staff 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 to discontinue secondary education at Paible School and transfer young people to Sgoil Lionacleit with effect from August 2012, offers educational benefits to young people directly affected by the proposal. These benefits relate to the social and personal development of the children and to improved access to curricular opportunities. The proposal makes the delivery of subjects through the medium of Gaelic more viable for young people of Paible School and Sgoil Lionacleit. It is not likely that the proposal will adversely affect the quality of education for children in Sgoil Lionacleit. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has appropriate plans in place for supporting young people as they prepare for the proposed move. On the whole, the proposal has the support of parents."*
- 10.7 The HMle report provides evidence that the proposal to amalgamate Paible School (S1-2) with Sgoil Lionacleit will produce:
Educational benefits:
- Can deliver Curriculum for Excellence effectively
 - Will assure more effective use of resources – financial, staffing and estate
 - Will ensure that pupils are educated in buildings fit for the 21st Century
- 10.8 In its submission in response to the consultations, Bòrd na Gàidhlig commented on areas where the Education and Children's Services Department should do further work to promote Gàidhlig and, in particular, the uptake of Gaelic Medium Education. However, the Bòrd welcomed Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's aspiration that GME should be available in all primary schools in the Western Isles through the implementation of the Schools Estate Strategy. In particular, Bòrd na Gàidhlig would not oppose the discontinuation of the S1-2 provision at Paible 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 Paible School (S1/2) would be provided at Sgoil Lionacleit and that the education provision should be discontinued at Paible School (S1/2) from 29 June 2012.

- 10.10 The Director of Education and Children's Services recommends that a transfer of pupils from Paible School (S1-2) to Sgoil Lionacleit 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 Paible 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 Paible 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 Paible 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 Paible and Sgoil Lionacleit s to develop a transition plan that will ensure an effective transition for pupils and staff to Sgoil Lionacleit .

RECOMMENDATION

- 11.1 It is recommended that:
- a) the S1/S2 education provision at Paible School be discontinued with effect from 29 June 2012; and
 - b) the pupils of S1/2 at Paible School continue their education at Sgoil Lionacleit, from 16 August 2012.