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Review of Education Provision
at
SCALPAY SCHOOL
Isle of Harris

CONSULTATION REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2010

Roinn an Fhoghlaim is Seirbheisean Chloinne

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Review of Education Provision
CONSULTATION REPORT FOR SCALPAY SCHOOL
Isle of Harris

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Review of Education Provision at Scalpay School, Isle of Harris Consultation Report

Report by Director of Education and Children's Services

CONSIDER THE PROPOSAL THAT :

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

BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Comhairle, at its Meeting on 29 April 2010, authorised the Director of Education and Children's Services to proceed to undertake the necessary statutory consultation with parents, staff, pupils and other interested parties affected by the proposal regarding the proposed closure of Scalpay 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 Scalpay 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, 1 June 2010.
- Pupils and staff were also consulted separately.
- HMle 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. 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 Scalpay Primary School on 1 June 2010
- Meetings with staff at both Scalpay and Sir E Scott Schools were held separately.
- Meetings with pupils at both Scalpay and Sir E Scott Schools were held separately.

OMISSIONS AND INACCURACIES

4.1 Within the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 there is guidance on how errors or omissions should be addressed. In paragraph 9.1 of the Proposal Document Scalpay 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 written representations	1
• Staff Professional Associations	2
• Bòrd na Gàidhlig	1
• NHS Western Isles	1
• Fire Service	1
Total:	6

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.

ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS
<p>ISSUE: Parents were unclear about arrangements for transport and bridge closure in adverse weather conditions.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Comhairle will develop a procedure in consultation with the parents and staff.

TRANSITION TO NEW SCHOOL
<p>ISSUE: Parents asked if pupils from Scalpay School would be expected to continue their education at Sir E Scott School if the new school was not completed as planned.</p> <p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pupils from Scalpay School would not be moved into Sir E Scott School until the new building is complete.

PUPIL CAPACITY AT NEW SCHOOL
<p>ISSUE: The point was raised that the design for the new school should enable further expansion if pupil numbers increased significantly in the future.</p> <p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All schools in the WISP initiative have an element of future-proofing written into their design. • On the basis of current pupil roll data, we are confident that there is capacity at Sir E Scott for all pupils, within the relevant catchment area.

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 Scalpay School and the transfer of pupils to Sir E Scott School . 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: The Comhairle should assess its arrangements for transporting children, particularly the very young, from Scalpay to Sir E Scott School. In particular, it should assess the capacity of the transport used; levels of supervision to ensure the safety of all children; the sharing of transport with fare paying passengers and severe weather arrangements. It should also set out clearly the number of days of education that may be lost to children from Scalpay due to bad weather, including, for example, the impact of closures of the Scalpay Bridge.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was agreed with parents, that an adverse weather procedure would be put in place, to address concerns. • The number of school days that were lost to pupils in Scalpay in the last two years due to adverse weather was two. However, alternative arrangements were put in place by some parents to ensure pupil attendance. Winds have to be in excess of 85 miles per hour, and from a specific direction, for the bridge to be closed to all vehicles. This is a rare occurrence. • The Comhairle will continue to provide transportation that meets all contract specifications and 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 dealt with.
<p>ISSUE: The Comhairle should keep parents of children attending both schools informed of progress being made with the planned extension to Sir E Scott School.</p> <p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The WISP project is committed to regular updates on progress with the school building projects. The Comhairle will undertake to ensure that pupils, parents and the community of both schools are kept informed of the progress in the Project and the extent to which the Project is likely to be completed on time. In addition, the contractor (FMP) will include Scalpay pupils in their information sharing and progress update meetings.
<p>ISSUE: The Comhairle should take full account of the composite response submitted by Bòrd na Gàidhlig.</p> <p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bòrd na Gàidhlig commented on areas where the Education and Children's Services Department should do further work to promote Gàidhlig and, in particular, the uptake of Gaelic Medium Education. • As a result, the Education and Children's Services Department has re-focused its bid proposal for Gaelic Specific Grant to work with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and partners to increase the primary enrolment numbers and maximise opportunities for Gaelic Medium Education. This will also include the possibility of later entry to Gaelic Medium Education and an emphasis on Gaelic Medium Education in all pre-school provision associated with local primary schools.

- The Comhairle in recent years has seen a steady growth in 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 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 Scalpay School Pupils

Benefits:

- Making new friends
- Getting used to new things
- Having a bigger football team
- Having a new playground
- Playing more football.

Issues of Concern

- They would have to travel further and someone might be sick
- Tarbert is a busier place than Scalpay
- It might be hard to make new friends.
- Having to get used to new teachers.
- You might get lost because the building would be so big.

RESPONSE:

These issues were discussed with the pupils, and where possible, answers were provided. Pupils were assured that any potential change in the arrangements for their education would be a gradual process, which would engage them fully.

Areas where we might help

- P1-3 having their own part of the school/playground.
- Visit school and get shown round.
- Have a tour of the school
- Put a map of the school on the wall.
- Get a leaflet telling you about the school; when it opens, playtimes, lunchtimes etc.

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:

- What is going to happen to Scalpay School?
- What will happen to the Smartboards?
- When would they get their uniforms?

RESPONSE:

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

Summary of Consultation with Sir E Scott School Pupils as the receiving School

Benefits

- More money for school
- Children who don't have friends have a chance to get friends
- More friends, new friends
- The teaching system would be better since the schools are all together

Issues of Concern

- No Sports Day for the Primary or Harris inter-school competitions or Local Mod
- Bus journeys might be longer
- Sir E Scott pupils may feel territorial/might not want them in their school
- Need to buy more resources
- Could be more bullying
- Overcrowded classes, less space
- If there is more children each child won't get as much attention as they did
- Children with learning difficulties, eg autism might find it hard to adjust

RESPONSE:

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

Areas where we might help

- Arrange activities to help encourage friendship and team working
- Speak to them regularly
- Have an Induction day for them/pupils could have a session to meet with them
- Buddy system
- Play with them/play stuff they like to do
- Get some teachers to go to the schools and tell them what Sir E Scott is like
- Arrange activities which would include team working so that they wouldn't be competitive
- Throw them a big party

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.

Scalpay School Staff

- Staff expressed regret that after many years of association with the school and having a school in their community it was now necessary to transfer to Sir E Scott School.

Sir E Scott School Staff

- Staff raised a number of issues in relation to the implications for their employment. There were no implications and staff were advised of the relevant HR policies and procedures.

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. This was 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 Scalpay School to speak to parents, pupils and staff. They attended the public meeting on 1 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 Scalpay Primary School and transfer children to Sir E Scott School in Tarbert with effect from August 2012, offers some educational benefits for children directly affected by the proposal and more widely across Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. By 2012 the school roll may be as low as five and there would be educational and social benefits for the children moving to a larger school. They would have significantly enhanced learning experiences in a modern and well-resourced building. They would have access to Gaelic medium education and increased interaction with others of the same age and stage. They would have access to a wider range of extra-curricular opportunities, although participation may be restricted by travel arrangements. The proposal would not adversely affect the quality of education for children already attending Sir E Scott School, provided the planned building programme is complete in time to receive the Scalpay children in August 2012. Staff at both schools would benefit from more opportunities to work and plan with a greater number of colleagues. The Comhairle would be able to make more efficient and effective use of its resources to the benefit of learners throughout its area."
- 10.7 The HMle report provides evidence that the proposal to amalgamate Scalpay School with Sir E Scott School will produce:
Educational benefits:
- Can deliver Curriculum for Excellence effectively
 - Will assure more effective use of resources – financial, staffing and estate
 - Will ensure that pupils are educated in buildings fit for the 21st Century
- 10.8 In its submission in response to the consultations, Bòrd na Gàidhlig commented on areas where the Education and Children's Services Department should do further work to promote Gàidhlig and, in particular, the uptake of Gaelic Medium Education. However the Bòrd welcomed Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's aspiration that GME should be available in all primary schools in the Western Isles through the implementation of the Schools Estate Strategy. In particular, Bòrd na Gàidhlig would not oppose the closure of Scalpay 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 Scalpay Primary School would be provided at Sir E Scott School and that the education provision should be discontinued at Scalpay Primary School from 29 June 2012.

- 10.10 The Director of Education and Children's Services recommends that a transfer of pupils from Scalpay School to Sir E Scott School will have educational benefits and that the learning opportunities and experience for pupils will be significantly widened. There will be :
- increased opportunities for pupils, both curricular and extra-curricular activities;
 - greater flexibility in grouping children for learning and teaching;
 - greater flexibility in the deployment of staff to meet learning needs;
 - a larger staff will offer a wider range of expertise resulting in increased opportunities for sharing effective practice, more collegiate support and a wider range of learning and teaching approaches;
 - more management support to promote school improvement.
- 10.11 Pupils and parents of Scalpay School would have access to a modern educational establishment, which is fully equipped and designed to meet the needs of pupils and fully deliver a Curriculum for Excellence. There is an opportunity for the pupils, staff and parents of both schools to benefit from working together to ensure that the very best quality of learning and teaching is available to all pupils, irrespective of their needs or abilities.
- 10.12 The proposal will result in pupils at Scalpay School attending a building that is modern and better designed for the delivery of a 21st Century curriculum.
- 10.13 The closure of Scalpay School will both improve efficiency of the school estate and enable investment in education and provide a better educational experience for pupils.
- 10.14 Should the proposal be approved the Director of Education and Children's Services will work with parents and staff in Scalpay and Sir E Scott Schools to develop a transition plan that will ensure an effective transition for pupils and staff to Sir E Scott School.

RECOMMENDATION

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