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

CONSULTATION REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2010

Roinn an Fhoghlaim is Seirbheisean Chloinne

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

Report by Director of Education and Children's Services

CONSIDER THE PROPOSAL THAT:

- **The S1/S2 education provision at Shawbost School be discontinued with effect from 29 June 2012**
- **That the pupils of S1/2 at Shawbost 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 Shawbost 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 Shawbost 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 Monday, 14 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 in relation to the proposal being implemented. Therefore, a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

CONSULTATION MEETINGS

3.1 Consultation meetings were held as follows:

- Public meeting at Shawbost Primary School on 14 June 2010
- Meetings with staff at both Shawbost School and The Nicolson Institute were held separately.
- Meetings with pupils at both Shawbost School and The Nicolson Institute 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 Shawbost was described as an accessible rural school when in fact it is a very remote rural school. An advertisement to that effect was placed in local newspapers. Attention was drawn to the error at the Public Meeting and the correct definition was given. This error was not deemed to be material and therefore no further action was taken in relation to this matter.

4.2 On page 3 of the Proposal Document, where the proposal is set out, it incorrectly states 'S1/S1 education provision at Shawbost School'. This should have read 'S1/S2 education provision at Shawbost School'. The proposal was correctly advertised. 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
• Community Petition with 430 signatures	1
• Individual written representations (5 letter with 2 signatures)	11
• Parent Council	3
• Staff Professional Associations	2
• Bòrd na Gàidhlig	1
• NHS Western Isles	1
• Fire Service	1
• Alasdair Allan, MSP	2
TOTAL:	22

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.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL FACTORS REGARDING CHILDREN
<p>ISSUE: Pupils are visible and cared for in Shawbost School. Each child is known to the adults that teach them. The anonymity of a large school can be a barrier to the professional development of a teacher.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 Reports highlight a good standard of personal and social support to young people in Western Isles schools. • 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 which is used, along with school and Department business plans, to ensure that all staff have access to appropriate CPD. • 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

<p>ISSUE: The fact that each child is visible and well known to the adults that teach them means that teachers can be more responsive to their learning styles.</p> <p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff are required to prepare appropriate learning and teaching plans, which must address a variety of learning styles, breadth of curriculum and appropriate differentiation. This, together with the pastoral care system, ensures that the needs of all children are identified and addressed.
<p>ISSUE: Monitoring of pupils during the school day and school security are a concern to parents. Main issues raised were access to the town and children’s safety.</p> <p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance and behaviour are monitored on a period-by-period basis. Any issues of concern regarding pupil behaviour are logged and appropriate action taken. • During the consultation it became clear that a number of parents were concerned regarding the possibility of their children being able to visit the town centre during the lunch break. 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 2 will not be allowed to leave the school premises over lunchtime, unless their parents have requested this in writing. • 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 providing a drop-off closer to the main school building.
<p>ISSUE: Bullying – concern expressed about the potential for bullying in The Nicolson Institute as a larger school and the emotional and social innocence or immaturity of children from the S1-2 schools to cope.</p> <p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 a particular size of school. Clearly, the bigger the school the more likely it is that there could be incidents. However, procedures are in place in all schools to ensure early identification and intervention of such incidents. • Fortunately, all children in the Western Isles live, and 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 of a similar age, stage or ability are any “more innocent” than children in S1-6 schools.

<p>PARENTAL CHOICE</p>
<p>ISSUE: Some parents were concerned that the removal of S1-2 removed parental choice for secondary education in Lewis.</p> <p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The legislation provides the opportunity for parental choice. 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 must also be borne in mind 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.

ATTAINMENT

ISSUE: 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; Shawbost School has better attainment; anxiety that not all pupils' needs are met in The Nicolson Institute.

RESPONSE:

- The Nicolson Institute represents approximately 60% of the secondary population of the Western Isles. Attainment in The Nicolson Institute is good and the Western Isles S1-6 schools' 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 the 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 Shawbost S1-2 provision with The Nicolson Institute would result in any detriment to levels of educational attainment. 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.

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? Another option raised by parents was the designation of Shawbost as a Gaelic school or the provision of a Gaelic school on the Westside of the island.

RESPONSE

- S1-2 schools do share itinerant staff with The Nicolson Institute and other S1-2 schools. A secondary timetable provided by itinerant staff and offering a wide range of specialist subjects could not be sustained 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.
- The community consultations raised interesting alternatives, to which the Education and Children's Services Department are giving serious consideration, 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. This model, however, is not sustainable as the primary mechanism for delivering comprehensive secondary education, and would only be suitable in a situation where it was not possible to bring children and young people physically into a school situation.

- It is 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. 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 all S1-2 schools be upgraded to S1-3 and be provided with staff and resources to enable the delivery of the forth level of CfE. Examination of this option concluded that this would not provide the best educational provision. This would imply significant additional costs and could affect the attainment of pupils on transfer to S4-6.
- There is no current evidence that there is sufficient demand to justify an all-Gaelic secondary school on the Westside of Lewis. The Education and Children's Services Department has consulted in the past on the establishment of Gaelic-only primaries and there was little support for this from the community. The only place where there would appear to be a sufficient number of young people to justify a Gaelic School would be in the Stornoway area. The Department is committed to undertaking a consultation on this basis during the 2010-11 session. In Shawbost School, the small number of fluent Gaelic speakers at present, does not provide a viable grouping for the teaching of subjects through Gaelic medium.
- The only alternative options for the future provision of education for pupils in S1/S2 at Shawbost School are 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.
 This option does not provide educationally beneficial class groupings, which would enrich the learning experiences. The Comhairle, does not within its current budget, have the means to develop, fully staff and resource the 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 budget have the capacity to develop, fully staff and resource the extended provision.

These options are therefore not considered to be viable.

ISSUE: Many in the community and some teachers believe that Curriculum for Excellence can be delivered in an S1-2 school.

RESPONSE

- Elements of Curriculum for Excellence 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 group and environment.
- S1-2 schools could only 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 mean some young people having to transfer to the NI, in order to work at an appropriate level with an appropriate peer group, otherwise this could result in young people having a limited experience.

MIGRATION

ISSUE: 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, necessary for attracting people to live in the community, impact on economic potential.

RESPONSE

- Over a period of 30 years, with significantly more schools than we currently have, there has been an annual decline in the pupil population and there is no evidence within the Western Isles that having a school in a community, increases inward migration. 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 fact, in some communities, the population has increased in spite of 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 Shawbost 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 youth and young people, has been developed and is currently being considered at stage 2.
- There is no proposal to close Shawbost School Primary School.
- The School Estate Review does not seek to remove schools from rural communities, but rather to provide schools on a community basis, that are viable and able to deliver a quality education in quality buildings, 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.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

ISSUE: A number of issues were raised in relation to physical and emotional health: children would no longer be able to walk to school.

RESPONSE

- In the majority of rural schools the catchment area is greater than the one mile distance. Not all children who attend Shawbost School are able to walk to school. In order to meet the National Walk to School initiative consideration could be given to a review of the Comhairle's Home to School Travel policy (currently one mile). Consideration may be given within the review, to ensuring pick-up/drop-off points to provide an opportunity to walk or cycle.

- A key criterion is the travel implications for pupils, which would arise in the event of the discontinuation of S1-2 provision at Shawbost School:
 - a) 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.
 - b) In the case of Shawbost School, the distance to the designated receiving school, The Nicolson Institute, is 20 miles. 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. 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. The Comhairle is currently making road improvements at Manor roundabout and Laxdale Bridge, in order to reduce delays and thereby provide a shorter travel time for buses from Shawbost to The Nicolson Institute.
 - c) In addition, the route has been reviewed and, with the introduction of another minibus, some improvements are anticipated:
 - morning routes from Shawbost via Barvas or Carloway will be within one hour;
 - the afternoon route from The Nicolson Institute to Shawbost via Barvas will be within one hour;
 - the afternoon route from The Nicolson Institute to Carloway will be reduced by 20 minutes.

Additional Support Needs (ASN)

- 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 are able to provide flexible and direct support to teaching staff. The enhanced facilities in the new school will also help to enhance learning and teaching for all children who have additional support needs.

ISSUE: Shawbost School provides a strong health promotion and healthy eating ethos. In addition, there was concern that pupils would chose to eat less healthy options in town.

RESPONSE

- Health and wellbeing is given significant priority in all school curricula in the Western Isles. All schools meet health promoting criteria and the provision of school meals complies with National Nutritional Guidelines.
- The Department accepts that pupils have a choice and can exercise that choice, supported by their parents, to visit and eat in the town centre. In addition, it needs to be remembered that the promotion of healthy life choices is a shared responsibility between children, parents and school.

ISSUE: Emotional and mental health is better when children are educated close to home.

RESPONSE

- Our ASN database does not indicate that distance to home is a significant factor in reduced mental health.

GAELIC
<p>ISSUE: A number of concerns were raised regarding the relative strength of Gaelic in Shawbost as compared to The Nicolson Institute.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently, pupils in Shawbost who are fluent in Gaelic receive Gaelic Medium teaching in Social Subjects and 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.

THE NEW NICOLSON INSTITUTE AND TRANSFER ARRANGEMENTS ISSUES
<p>ISSUE: When will pupils transfer if this is approved?</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Comhairle has given a guarantee that no pupils will be required to transfer from an S1-2 school until The Nicolson Institute is completed, at which time all children will be transferred.
<p>ISSUE: When will the new Nicolson Institute be completed?</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school will be fully operational from August 2012. However, some external works may be outstanding, which are due for completion in December 2012.
<p>ISSUE: A number of parents were concerned to know whether facilities at the new sports centre would be supervised, shared and whether child protection issues had been considered.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Sports Centre at lunchtimes is a public facility. As such, the supervision of young people is a matter for Sports Centre staff. If parents choose to allow their children to use the sports facilities, they need to be aware of this. • During class teaching time, changing facilities are segregated. Lunchtime use is subject to the same arrangements as normal public sessions and will not be subject to supervision by school staff. Normal child protection procedures would apply.
<p>ISSUE: The learning environment at Shawbost School was regarded as good by many parents and they were concerned as to whether this would be maintained.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Education and Children's Services Department agrees that Shawbost provides a good teaching environment. However, the investment in the new schools will ensure a better physical, learning and teaching environment.
<p>ISSUE: Are canteen facilities adequate in The Nicolson Institute?</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new Nicolson Institute's canteen facilities will meet the demands of its population.

TRANSPORT

ISSUE: Parents wanted to know how transport costs were calculated and were they current.

RESPONSE

- Figures were calculated based on a historical formula which has now been revised to reflect the current position. The formula calculation for any bus journey is based on a combination of distance and numbers travelling on the route. The formula calculation has now been updated and the revised figures are more representative. The costs for transport in 2009/10 were £12,928.
- The total revised cost for **2010/11** is detailed in the following table.

Shawbost Sec School 2010	
DESCRIPTION	TOTAL BUDGET
Employee Expenses	312,268
Premises Related Expenditure	31,973
Utilities Related Expenditure	22,928
Resources Related Expenditure	10,634
Transport Related Expenditure	33,964
Catering Related Expenditure	32,538
Net Expenditure	444,305
Parent Council Funding	524
TOTAL	444,829
Number of Pupils	39
COST PER PUPIL	11,406

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

ISSUE: Safety on school buses: a number of parents were concerned regarding the behaviour of the public on the integrated service, lack of supervision, numbers on buses, contractor compliance, etc.

RESPONSE

- 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. Where concerns have been raised regarding passenger behaviour, buses have been fitted with CCTV cameras.
- 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 through the provision of 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 have been 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, and may reduce bullying or other nuisance behaviour.
- In light of recent community conversations, the Education and Children's Services Department is considering a review of the integrated service versus dedicated school transport in some instances.

ISSUE: Another issue raised was concern over the length of the journey time between home and school and the early pick up time for some children and their late arrival home.

RESPONSE

- The Comhairle's Home to School Travel Policy provides transport for children who have to walk more than 1 mile.
- In the majority of rural schools within the Outer Hebrides, the catchment area is greater than the 1 mile distance.
- The distances that pupils have to travel to and from school are clearly important in any assessment of appropriate transport provision. In addition, distances of themselves have to be set in the context of road conditions, and the time that such travelling takes.
- The Comhairle Policy states that primary pupils should not as a rule have to travel more than 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.

- It is proposed to introduce an additional minibus to ensure that the longest journey time is within the maximum travelling time recommended in the Comhairle's policy, i.e. under 1 hour.

ISSUE: Some concern was expressed that the increase in buses may have a negative environmental impact.

RESPONSE

- The existing transport network will accommodate the majority of pupils travelling to The Nicolson Institute. The additional provision designed to reduce the transit time, will have some 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.

CLASS SIZES

ISSUE: Parents were concerned that class sizes in The Nicolson Institute would increase and that the staff to pupil ratio would decrease having a negative impact on children's learning.

RESPONSE

- Class sizes are governed by national staffing formulae. Based on the current pupil population the average class size in S1-2 in Shawbost School is approx 16. S1 English and Maths in the NI would be approx 19 and in other subjects between 18 and 26

AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

ISSUE: 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 usually make arrangements for children to get passes for the service bus, or where possible, arrange other transport.
- After-school activities will also continue to be supported through Community Education, Sport and Health and the Voluntary Sector in local communities.
- 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 ESF application has currently been submitted.
- After school activities are planned by individual schools, and will take account of transport and accessibility for young people.

ISSUE: 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.

INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

ISSUE: Many parents felt that Shawbost School had adequate ICT provision matching that available in The Nicolson Institute.

RESPONSE

- Shawbost School currently has access to wireless networks, interactive whiteboards, and classroom in a box.
- 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.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

ISSUE: Concern was expressed that parental involvement in The Nicolson Institute would not be as great as that in Shawbost School due to the distance involved.

RESPONSE

- The Department recognises the close relationships that parents in rural communities have maintained with their schools. However, experience suggests that parental involvement in a school is largely focused on personal choice and educational matters, rather than broader community issues. All schools in the Western Isles, including The Nicolson Institute, work hard to maintain and develop parental involvement and relationships.

SCHOOL ROLLS

ISSUE: The community felt that school rolls in Shawbost were healthy and could maintain secondary provision.

RESPONSE

- The total school rolls have fallen steadily since Comhairle nan Eilean Siar was established as a new Education Authority in 1975. Predictions made about falling school rolls in the past have proved to be accurate and therefore have been reliable. The total roll (primary and secondary) thirty years ago was 6,246 while in September 2010 this had fallen to 3,620. Even since the current phase of the debate on education provision started in session 2007- 2008, the number has fallen by another 213. In the last six years the pupil roll in the Western Isles has fallen by 394.
- As pupil population has declined, the level of funding has also fallen proportionately. This has the effect of making the current pattern of provision unsustainable.
- Over an 8 year period the roll at Shawbost School has fallen by 20%.

COSTS

ISSUE: A number of issues were raised in relation to financial costs and savings.

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 Shawbost School are approximately £240k.
- 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 Human Resources strategy is being implemented, to ensure a planned workforce reduction.

- The Shawbost 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
Shawbost School (S1/2)	£8,681

- As will be observed, the average costs per pupil within the Western Isles are much higher than the Scottish average in any year. When comparing the relevant costs it will be noted that, owing to the small number, the cost per pupil for Shawbost Secondary School is substantially higher than the figures for the potential receiving school, and slightly higher than the average for the Western Isles.

All the above calculations are based on the census figures which are collected in September each year and are therefore frequently different from roll figures we produce at other times of the year.

LODGINGS

ISSUE: 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.
- In light of the consultations, the Comhairle is investigating a number of options to support children and families who have to travel in excess of one hour. In these circumstances each case will be addressed on an individual basis.

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 Shawbost 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

- 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 factors 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 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:
 - Improvements to travel arrangements
 - Improvements at Manor roundabout and Laxdale Bridge.
- The Education and Children's Services Department will continue to work with parents to monitor the effects of the travel arrangements.
- If this proposal is implemented the Comhairle recognises that enhanced transport structures are 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: 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:

- 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.
- The total revised cost for **2010/11** is detailed in the following table.

Shawbost Sec School 2010	
DESCRIPTION	TOTAL BUDGET
Employee Expenses	312,268
Premises Related Expenditure	31,973
Utilities Related Expenditure	22,928
Resources Related Expenditure	10,634
Transport Related Expenditure	33,964
Catering Related Expenditure	32,538
Net Expenditure	444,305
Parent Council Funding	524
TOTAL	444,829
Number of Pupils	39
COST PER PUPIL	11,406

ISSUE: If secondary provision is retained at Shawbost School beyond 2012 it is likely that there will be implications for the Comhairle's proposals to close Carloway Primary School and Bragar Primary School and relocate the children to Shawbost School. There will also be implications relating to the proposal to discontinue S1/S2 secondary provision at Lionel 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 Lionel is implemented and if the S1-2 provision at Shawbost 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 Shawbost 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.
- In the event that the S1-2 provision continues at Shawbost School there will still be capacity to accommodate Carloway and/or Bragar Schools based on current enrolments and future projections.

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 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 at the current time which would support the establishment of a stand-alone Gaelic school on the Westside of Lewis.
- 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 subjects available to certificate level, being taught through the medium of Gaelic.
- 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 Shawbost School (S1-2) Pupils

Benefits:

- More experiences in bigger school
- You could socialise with more people
- You can go for your lunch and get whatever you want without a line
- You can get buses more often
- You can associate with people from different religions and countries
- You feel more responsible
- There are more people to help you
- There are different age group
- Pupils will have more room in the school
- The school wont have to get as much uniforms
- S1/2 wouldn't be there to pick on the primary children
- There would be more teachers

Issues of Concern

- Pupils want to stay at Shawbost
- Concerned that NI might not be that good
- Might feel sick on the bus
- People might bully you when the teachers aren't looking
- You might get lost because it is big
- The travelling will take forever
- You will be around people that are older than you
- The NI will have more pupils to control at break time with more difficulties
- We will lose some of our friends
- Not very healthy food
- You would have to get up really early
- You would have to get a bus everyday
- If you don't live in Stornoway you couldn't walk to school and you couldn't get much exercise
- You might get peer pressured to do some things you don't want to do
- You don't know anyone there
- The work could be more difficult
- You wont feel confident or prepared
- You would miss your friends
- You would have to stay in town until after 6 o'clock if you attend after school activities
- You would have to get up really early

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

- All pupils could be given a map of the building
- Make the work a bit easier
- Don't close S1/2
- Provide a little less time in class and longer for lunch
- Head master to give you blue print of school and classrooms
- Arrange a fun day in NI for S1/2s before they go
- Provide more transport
- Provide more S1-6 schools
- Ask the teachers not to put a lot of pressure on you
- Get a canteen for the NI

RESPONSE:

Most of the suggestions provided by pupils were reasonable. 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:

- Numbers in the NI
- When is it going to be built?
- Where will it be built?
- Why are we doing it? Education? Money? Learning?

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 Institute 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. 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.

- Proposal was causing community anxiety
- Shawbost needs bigger classes and staff are concerned regarding space
- Staff accept the case for finances but are concerned that school closures affect rural villages
- Staff are concerned that families may move to Stornoway with the loss of the secondary
- All staff feel The Nicolson Institute provide a good education and that the debate isn't over education but the loss of rural schools
- Staff feel that S1/2s are available to provide more attention to young people as their work does not have the same focus on certification
- Travel is a major concern and may affect children's capacity to learn and realise their potential
- S2's in the S1/2 school's have an opportunity to take on significant responsibilities and mature and in that sense are big fish in a little pond whereas in The Nicolson they become small fish in a very big pond.
- Staff are concerned that Shawbost school has a strong Gaelic ethos which is not replicated in The Nicolson and they agree the S1/2 school have provided a significant contribution to Gaelic language and culture as reflected in mod participation etc.
- Staff are concerned that the smaller schools encourage universal participation in sporting events and representation in the National Mod etc and on that basis are more inclusive in comparison to the larger schools which must rely on selection
- This is also reflected in greater participation in school trips. The loss of the S1/2 school would result in the loss of the rural sports which has provided a significant opportunity for competition for young people
- Schools have provided a significant focus for parental involvement, parent councils and communities being able to work together. Staff feel Shawbost School has very effective relationships with the community as well as associate primaries
- Staff feel S1/2s are very young and will have great difficulties with the time spent travelling and the physical demands on them
- Staff are also concerned that young people may have more restricted opportunities for extra curricular activities
- In relation to the proposal document staff felt Gaelic was a particular strength and feature of Shawbost School with a lot of cross curricular work and language being anchored in the school and community
- There is a Gaelic speaking staff room and the environment of the school is predominantly in Gaelic. Staff are also concerned that the proposal document contained the use of the word believe and better without necessarily always showing evidence but largely in relation to costs
- Staff also felt that ASN provision both distributed over a number of schools and in the rural schools were of high quality in comparison to what they believe could be provided in the larger schools

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
- In the interim period increase the opportunities for pupils in the second year schools to take part in activities with NI pupils.

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 Shawbost School (S1-2) to speak to parents, pupils and staff. They attended the public meeting on 14 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 Shawbost 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 Shawbost 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 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 S1-2 at Shawbost 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 Shawbost Primary School would be provided at The Nicolson Institute and that the education provision should be discontinued at Shawbost Primary School from 29 June 2012.

- 10.10 The Director of Education and Children's Services recommends that a transfer of pupils from Shawbost 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 Shawbost 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 Shawbost 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 Shawbost 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 Shawbost 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 Shawbost School be discontinued with effect from 29 June 2012; and
 - b) the pupils of S1/2 at Shawbost School continue their education at The Nicolson Institute, from 16 August 2012