

Agenda Item	18.
Report No	CLH 40/19

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Care, Learning and Housing

Date: 29 May 2019

Report Title: Review of the Statutory Consultation Exercise to establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Ullapool Primary School

Report By: Interim Director of Care and Learning

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Following conclusion of the statutory consultation process, this report and accompanying information sets out a recommendation to establish a Gaelic Medium (GM) catchment area for Ullapool Primary School.
- 1.2 The proposal was advanced in line with statutory guidance issued by Bòrd na Gàidhlig, which recommends that local authorities create catchment areas for Gaelic Medium education (GME). Ullapool Primary School has offered GME since 1993, and is the only primary school within the Associated School Group to do so. It is proposed to formally create a GM catchment for Ullapool Primary School on the basis of the map shown at Appendix 2.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:-
- i. Consider the Proposal set out within the Consultation Report (Appendix A) and associated appendices;
 - ii. Consider the representations received and the report from Education Scotland;
 - iii. Agree to recommend to the Council the creation of a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Ullapool Primary School on the basis shown on the map at Appendix 2.

3. Public Consultation

- 3.1 **Appendix A** is the proposal for decision. The original proposal issued for consultation, and relevant appendices for consideration by the Committee are all also circulated as appendices to this Paper. They provide details of all consultation comments received, the note of the public meeting, the report from Education Scotland, and the Council's response to comments arising from the consultation.
- 3.2 The proposal was widely circulated to parents, pupils and others. Five written responses were received. One of these did not express a view on the GM catchment, seeking instead to raise another matter.
- 3.3 Most respondents, and the Bòrd in particular, recognised the benefits of offering GME and supported the principle of extending access to GME to as many children as possible. Four written responses were against the specific catchment proposal outlined by the Council, though made no suggestion as to an alternative. The main concerns expressed related to the potential effect of the new catchment on the outlying schools within the Ullapool Associated School Group (ASG). There was a concern that the viability of the smaller schools could be affected by pupils opting for GME at Ullapool Primary. These concerns are specifically addressed within the report at Appendix A.
- 3.4 Whilst the response from Bòrd na Gàidhlig welcomed the recommendation to establish a catchment area for Ullapool Primary School, the Bòrd's response also set out some comments and issues. These have been further discussed with the Bòrd's Chief Executive and Head of Education, with the Council advised they were now content. Detailed responses to the points raised are set out in Appendix A.
- 3.5 The note of the public meeting is at **Appendix 4**. All the comments and issues raised were similar to those points set out above. There was a full discussion in response to all the questions raised.

4. Report from Education Scotland

- 4.1 In their report, Education Scotland noted that the proposal is responding to legislation which requires catchment areas to be established for GME provisions, and that the council is taking forward a duty to support and promote GME. The Inspectors concluded the proposal is of educational benefit to some children and parents in that it increases accessibility to GME. The proposal makes the most appropriate use of resources, while meeting current demand for GME. The Inspectors added that the Council has some reasonable concerns to address in taking the proposal forward and should give more detail on the educational benefits of this proposal that are specific to GME in their proposed catchment area. This is addressed in the final report at Appendix A.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 Having considered the various representations and responses, these have been addressed within the final report at Appendix A. The GME provision at Ullapool Primary has in practice operated since 1993, and the recommendation is to formalise a catchment for that existing provision. While noting the concerns expressed by some in relation to implications for ASG schools, the Council is of the view that the formalisation of this catchment is unlikely to lead to a significant change in parental choice within the ASG, given the length of time GME provision has operated. The Council also has a duty to support and promote GME, as well as to sustain its existing English medium provision, and considers the recommendations balance these requirements. Parental choice will ultimately determine the implications for English and Gaelic medium provision, and as set out within the final report, the formal establishment of this catchment does not alter that, within Statutory Guidance on GME, parents can request an assessment of the need for GMPE provision under the 2016 Act even where an education authority already has catchment areas in relation to existing GMPE.

6. Procedure

- 6.1 The legislation requires that any proposal for decision must be published at least 3 weeks in advance of the meeting at which any decision may be made, to allow time for further representations. The proposal was published on 24 April 2019. Any further representations that are received will be tabled at the meeting for the attention of Members.
- 6.2 As this report relates to a statutory consultation, any decision taken by this Committee will be considered by the full Highland Council before being implemented.

7. Implications

- 7.1 Resource – The proposal largely formalises arrangements that have previously operated on an informal basis. No additional costs are expected to arise.
- 7.2 Legal - The statutory consultation has been taken forward as per the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 7.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – None.
- 7.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever – None.
- 7.5 Risk – None.
- 7.6 Gaelic – The Proposal will provide clarity to local parents, in respect of entitlement to GME.

Designation: Interim Director of Care and Learning

Date: 25 April 2019

Authors: Brian Porter, Head of Resources
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Background Papers: Review of Consultation Report; original Proposal Paper and appendices



HIGHLAND COUNCIL

CARE AND LEARNING SERVICE

REVIEW OF THE PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A GAELIC MEDIUM CATCHMENT AREA FOR ULLAPOOL PRIMARY SCHOOL

This report has been prepared following a review of the proposal to establish a Gaelic Medium (GM) catchment area for Ullapool Primary School.

Having had regard (in particular) to:

- Relevant written representations received by the Council (from any person) during the consultation period.
- Oral representations made to it (by any persons) at the public meeting held at Ullapool Primary School on 12 November 2018.
- The report from Education Scotland.

This document has been issued by the Highland Council under the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

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Appendix 3 -	List of Responses Received
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Appendix 4	Minute of public meeting held at Ullapool Primary School on 12 November 2018
Appendix 5 -	Report from Education Scotland (English language version)
Appendix 5a	Report from Education Scotland (Gàidhlig language version)

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Highland Council's Care, Learning and Housing Committee, at its meeting on 18 October 2018, agreed that a statutory consultation be undertaken on the proposal to formally establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Ullapool Primary School. Ullapool Primary School has offered GME since 1993, and is the only primary school within the Associated School Group to do so
- 1.2 The Proposal Paper suggested that the new catchment will overlay the current English Medium (EM) catchments of Ullapool Primary School, Achiltibuie Primary School, Badcaul Primary School, Lochinver Primary School, and Stoer Primary School. Particular arrangements would apply for transport to Ullapool from the latter four catchment areas.
- 1.3 The Proposal Paper also suggested formalising the current arrangements relating to Gàidhlig Medium Education (GME) in Ullapool High School, under which the catchment area for Ullapool High School would apply to both Gàidhlig Medium and English Medium education.
- 1.4 **Appendix 1** is the original consultative paper and provides full details of the above proposal. **Appendices 1a and 1b** are the appendices to the original proposal.

2.0 Consultation process

- 2.1 The formal consultation period ran from Monday 29 October 2018 to Monday 10 December 2018. Written representations on the proposal were sought from interested parties as defined within the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.
- 2.2 In accordance with statutory requirements, the following were consulted:
- (i) Parents of pupils attending Ullapool Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
 - (ii) Parents of pupils attending Achiltibuie Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
 - (iii) Parents of pupils attending Badcaul Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
 - (iv) Parents of pupils attending Lochinver Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
 - (v) Parents of pupils attending Scoraig Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
 - (vi) The Parent Councils of each of the above schools;
 - (vii) All staff of the schools listed above;
 - (viii) Members of Parliament and Members of the Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal;
 - (ix) Trade union representatives;
 - (x) All Community Councils for the areas covered by the Proposal;
 - (xi) Bòrd na Gàidhlig;
 - (xii) Education Scotland;
 - (xvii) Highland Youth Convenor
- 2.3 The proposal document was advertised on the Highland Council website.
- 2.4 A public meeting was held at Ullapool Primary School on 12 November 2018. The meeting was advertised in advance on the Highland Council website and Facebook page, and in the *Ross-shire Journal*.
- 2.5 Following receipt of written representations received by Highland Council and consideration of oral representations made at the public meeting, officials reviewed the proposals.
- 2.6 The outcome of this review process is reflected in the response, conclusion and recommendations outlined below.

3.0 Responses received

- 3.1 A list of those who responded in writing during the public consultation is at **Appendix 3**, whilst copies of the actual responses are at **Appendix 3a-3e**.
- 3.2 Only five written responses were received, and one of these did not express a view on the GM catchment, seeking instead to raise another matter.

- 3.3 Most respondents, and the Bòrd in particular, recognised the benefits of offering GME and supported the principle of extending access to GME to as many children as possible. Four written responses were against the specific catchment proposal outlined by the Council, though offered no alternative to the Council's proposal. Three expressed concern about the potential effect of the new catchment on the outlying schools within the Ullapool Associated School Group (ASG). Three of these schools have very small rolls (of between 5 and 15 pupils) and the other has a roll of less than forty. There was a fear that the viability of the smaller schools could be affected by pupils opting for Gaelic Medium Education (GME) at Ullapool Primary. These concerns are specifically addressed at Section 4 below.
- 3.4 The response from Bòrd na Gàidhlig welcomed the recommendation to establish a catchment area for Ullapool Primary School where there is GME provision. However, the Bòrd's response set out a view that the travel distances and times set out in the proposal are not 'reasonable' for primary-age children, and especially when the transport provision would be a bus shared with high school pupils. The Bòrd also expressed the view that the proposal reduces the opportunity to attract parents to choose GME provision for their children in their communities. They added that the suggestion that catchment areas will normally overlay a number of school catchment areas applied particularly to urban areas.
- 3.5 The Bòrd indicated they would not wish any pupils who currently travel to Bunscoil Ullapool to be disadvantaged and so recommend that the opportunity to enter GME is retained until alternative provision is available locally. They indicated a willingness to engage with the Council, as a partner, in further reflection on the proposals to ensure a solution is found which delivers the Council's aims of both creating reasonable catchments and catchment structures which continue to attract an increasing uptake of GME.
- 3.6 The concerns raised by the Bòrd are addressed at Issues/Responses 3-6 below. Response 6 below explains that officers of Highland Council had a constructive discussion with the Bòrd on 31 January 2019, at which the Bòrd confirmed they were reassured by commitments made by Highland Council staff.
- 3.7 The note of the public meeting is at **Appendix 4**. Several people expressed concern that the Proposal could have a negative impact on the smaller schools within the ASG, and there were also questions about whether the Council would consider the delivery of GME in those smaller schools. Other respondents raised questions about the potential opportunities and threats to Ullapool Primary itself. There was a full discussion in response to all the questions raised.

4.0 Issues raised during the consultation period

- 4.1 The main arguments opposed to the proposal are summarised below, together with the responses from the Council. In many cases different responses have

made the same or very similar arguments, and where this occurs the arguments have been addressed only once.

Issue 1

This seems a first step towards enlarging the Ullapool catchment area for both Gaelic and English education in order to close the smaller schools in the various villages around Ullapool; in my opinion very much a step in the wrong direction. Closing local schools is a move towards creating ghost villages on the west coast and killing the community. If learning Gaelic is really such an essential skill for Achiltibuie children, then why not teach it as a second language in much the same way as French is being taught now?

This is much riskier than indicated in consultation papers. The small schools in the proposed catchment are extremely vulnerable to even minor reductions in pupil numbers. Whilst the distances involved are expected to limit the number of children travelling to Ullapool for primary GME, many other factors (friends, perceived better schooling, etc.) may prove more powerful motivators towards moving. The impact of a school dwindling in numbers (and potentially closing) on a village (for instance Lochinver) is really bad.

Whilst I support the move to offer GME to all primary pupils in the area, the GM provision should be at the local schools, or risk the loss of those schools and the subsequent harm to the communities they serve.

I am concerned about the consequences for little schools like Achiltibuie if children are lured away to Ullapool by the attraction of Gaelic medium education. It's obviously very popular in Ullapool as there is a much bigger intake to the GM class than the mainstream one. Is there any reason to suppose that Achiltibuie parents are any less enthusiastic about Gaelic than their Ullapool contemporaries? But while they may be interested in Gaelic education for their children I imagine most would baulk at the idea of sending young children on a 50 mile round trip: most of it on a single track twisty road. My 13 yr old struggles with spending 15 hours a week travelling: away from home before 7.30am, not home till after 5pm. It's a long and tiring day. And small children often don't travel well. I imagine most parents would weigh up the pros and cons and conclude that it wasn't really worth the potential daily misery of travel sickness whatever the lingual benefits might be. So it's not really much of a choice.

In Achiltibuie Primary School there are several parents who don't drive themselves - making the prospect of their children being in Ullapool and hard to reach if there is even a minor emergency a worry. And then there are the after school activities. How do they get home if their parents don't have a car? There are no buses other than the school run. I spend hours of my time in parent taxi role - and it's not cheap! I intended to come to the public meeting in Ullapool, but with a busy week already involving several trips to and from Ullapool for after school activities, I was unable to face another one. I had offered some of the non-drivers a lift, but as their attendance hinged on me,

none of us could come.

There seems no doubt that the benefits of Gaelic medium education are clear and there are many enthusiastic supporters. It's just a great shame that it's all or more or less nothing. And the "all" is centralised in Ullapool. It's not really a choice for parents: most can't really send their children to Ullapool. And if they did, it could spell disaster for our little school here. I believe small schools are also an important part of Highland cultural heritage - and they're struggling and need support if this way of life has any future. It's a pity more Gaelic isn't available in our remote, Highland, crofting community. There's an irony there somewhere! Though I understand the children do currently get a flavour at the primary school here along with French. I'm all for languages of all sorts being introduced at an early age. and if Gaelic is acknowledged to be so important, why isn't there more on offer here? It's a topsy-turvy situation where learners have to go to the towns and cities for Gaelic, leaving little communities like Coigach behind and in the process adding to the depopulation that many of us are fighting against. We even have a Gaelic teacher who travels back and forth to Ullapool to teach children there and there are currently a couple of children who attend school in Ullapool - if they went to the local school here, it would make a big difference to its viability.

It will all boil down to budget. I don't think any of us expect a Gaelic medium unit in Achiltibuie. I'm not even certain how many would opt for it. However, it does seem cynical to offer Gaelic as a "choice", but only if you can get to Ullapool. Surely the option to have Gaelic on offer in Coigach would be a happier prospect for families here? Or does Highland Council hope that the Gaelic carrot dangled in Ullapool will do away with the need for inconvenient little schools out in the wilds?

Response 1

The Proposal is in no way a first step towards enlarging the Ullapool catchment area for both Gaelic and English education in order to close the smaller schools in the various villages around Ullapool.

The proposal is to give parents the option between GM and EM education. The proposal only covers GM education and does not change the catchment for EM schools, across the ASG. The Highland Council is reviewing the future of Stoer Primary, but only because that school has already been mothballed for several years.

The Council recognises the concerns within communities such as Achiltibuie, Badcaul and Lochinver about declining school rolls. In putting forward this Proposal, the Council has sought to strike a balance. The catchment area is being proposed in accordance with the Statutory Guidance, and the Council is seeking to encourage GME. We want to sustain our small schools but we also have a statutory duty to promote and support GME. Ultimately this will be a matter of parental choice.

Although at the present time Ullapool PS is the only school in the ASG that

offers Gaelic Medium education, parents of children under school age, and who have not yet started to attend a primary school, have a right to request an assessment of the need for Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) from the education authority in whose area their child lives. When an education authority receives a parental request for GMPE, the education authority must assess the need for GMPE. This remains the case even where an education authority already has a catchment area in relation to existing GMPE provision. The situation is not necessarily one of “all of nothing.”

Pupils at Achiltibuie Primary have been receiving regular Gaelic tuition since the beginning of the 2018-19 school session. There is however a significant difference between Gaelic Medium education and pupils receiving Gaelic as a second language. Gaelic medium education gives children an opportunity to learn Gaelic in the most natural way possible as the language is being absorbed as the language of instruction and through their learning.

Issue 2

The idea that 5 to 12 year old children benefit from spending 2 hours on a school bus on a daily basis is ridiculous. Children should not spend that much time travelling when they should be playing.

Response 2

Whether or not primary school children travel to Ullapool from the outlying schools within the ASG, in order to access GME, is entirely a decision for parents. The Proposal seeks to provide parents with the choice, but there is no compulsion or pressure to attend GME.

Issue 3

The Highland Council has provided information on distance and travel time for each of the primary schools within the proposed catchment area. The Bòrd considers that these distances and times are not 'reasonable' for primary-age children, and especially when the transport provision would be a bus shared with high school pupils. However, the Bòrd would not wish any pupils who currently travel to Bun-sgoil Ulapuil to be disadvantaged and so recommend that the opportunity to enter GME is retained until alternative provision is available locally.

Response 3

Highland Council agrees that that the opportunity to enter GME should be retained pending alternative provision being requested locally. This issue is discussed further at Response 4 below.

Issue 4

The Bòrd is further of the view that the proposal is contrary to the Guidance in

that it reduces the opportunity to attract parents to choose GME provision for their children in their communities.

The suggestion that catchment areas will normally overlay a number of school catchment areas applies particularly to urban areas.

Response 4

Highland Council is clear that the proposed GM catchment area for Ullapool Primary, if approved, would not preclude the setting up of more local provision, should demand for that be identified in future. Paragraph 1.22 of the Statutory Guidance on GME allows parents to request an assessment of the need for GMPE provision under the 2016 Act even where an education authority already has catchment areas in relation to existing GMPE.

The Statutory Guidance does not contain any advice to the effect that the principle of GM catchment areas overlaying a number of EM catchment areas applies particularly in urban areas. The lack of any such distinction has been noted in the Education Scotland report.

Issue 5

In the Bòrd's view the proposed catchment area for Ullapool Primary School would not support the availability and growth of GME.

Response 5

The Council recognises that the travel distances to Ullapool from the other schools in the ASG are unusually long. This is an unavoidable feature of the geography and population patterns in the area. The Council's proposal does however broaden access to GME within the Ullapool ASG.

As mentioned at Response 4, the creation of the Ullapool GM catchment does not necessarily preclude the creation of more local provision of GME within the ASG, should parental demand be identified.

Issue 6

The Bòrd will be happy to engage with the Council, as a partner, in further reflection on the proposals to ensure a solution is found which delivers the Council's aims of both creating reasonable catchments and catchment structures which continue to attract an increasing uptake of GME.

Response 6

Highland Council replied to the Bòrd on 18 December 2018, and officers of the Council and Bòrd na Gàidhlig met on 31 January 2019. The discussion was constructive. Officials from the Bòrd were reassured by the commitments outlined in the Council's letter of 18 December 2018, and which were repeated at the meeting.

Issue 7

French and BSL are currently offered as additional languages in Lochinver Primary School.

Consideration should be given to providing BSL in Ullapool High School as for the last few years, pupils have left Lochinver Primary School with a solid foundation in BSL but have had no opportunity to continue or advance their education at secondary level.

Response 7

The provision of languages other than Gaelic does not form any part of the Proposal being consulted on.

The delivery of BSL within Ullapool High School should be discussed, in the first instance, with the Head Teacher of that school. It may be the school can investigate possible future delivery taking cognisance of staffing levels and staffing expertise.

Highland Council delivers a Primary Language Learning programme for additional languages. This is delivered as part of the 1+2 Language Learning Approach, a statutory entitlement for Scottish learners by academic year 2020/21. This entitlement can be met through any language including BSL and with many Highland settings selecting Gaelic. The 1+2 model is delivered from primary 1 through to the end of secondary 3, as part of a pupil's Broad General Education (BGE).

5.0 Summary of the issues raised by Education Scotland

- 5.1 In line with legislative requirements, Education Scotland was invited to submit comments on the Council's proposals. A copy of the report from Education Scotland is appended – **Appendix 5/5a**.
- 5.2 In their report, Education Scotland noted that the proposal is responding to legislation which requires catchment areas to be established for GME provisions, and that the council is taking forward a duty to support and promote GME.
- 5.3 Education Scotland concluded the proposal is of educational benefit to some children and parents in that it increases accessibility to GME. The proposal makes the most appropriate use of resources, while meeting current demand for GME. The Inspectors added that the Council has some reasonable concerns to address in taking the proposal forward and should give more detail on the educational benefits of this proposal that are specific to GME in their proposed catchment area. Education Scotland specified that the Council should clarify their strategy for promoting the setting up of new GME provisions, while defining how they will protect children's safety whilst travelling on buses. The council

needs to continue to engage with all stakeholders, including Bòrd na Gàidhlig, in addressing the concerns outlined in their report.

5.4 The issues raised by Education Scotland are addressed in Section 6 below.

6.0 Responses to the Issues Raised by Education Scotland

Issue 8

In very rural areas, some consultees are concerned that the option of GME at Ullapool Primary School will adversely impact on the future of local schools.

Response 8

See Response 1 above.

Issue 9

There is a concern from a number of consultees that some of the distances to be travelled are not reasonable, particularly for young children. There are also a number of consultees who have concerns about the safety of young children travelling on buses.

Response 9

A number of primary and secondary school transport routes are combined with public bus services across THC area, and this has been the case for many years. Although parents are often apprehensive when such arrangements are planned, generally there are very few issues in practice. The Council allows but does not require operators to register their services as public service routes to enhance transport provision in the area, provided they ensure there is enough seating capacity with seatbelts for every entitled pupil.

In order to make travelling on high school buses safer for primary age pupils, we can assign specific seats in the front of the bus to be reserved for primary pupils. Also the High School could nominate bus monitors, and we would encourage this. Monitors would be responsible for ensuring everyone was travelling safely in their seats with their seatbelts on and in return could be issued with onward travel elsewhere (depending on the contractor) or perhaps some other incentives at school. They would be responsible for reporting any issues with the vehicle or route as well as reporting on behaviour of passengers.

Issue 10

The Council Educational Benefits statement should articulate more detail of the benefits of the proposal to current and future pupils.

Response 10

The discussion at the public meeting highlighted that the current informal arrangements have on occasion placed barriers in the way of parents seeking to access GME at Ullapool Primary. Parents have been asked to submit placing requests for GME, or it has been suggested they would not qualify for transport. Further detail is provided at A3 and A19 of the meeting note at Appendix 4. The clarification provided will be of benefit to parents and future pupils.

Issue 11

Consultees strongly supported the proposed establishment of a GME catchment area for Ullapool High School. However, they expressed concern at the lack of continuity offered by the high school following the primary stage. Parents showed strong interest in working with the head teacher and staff to increase the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence through Gaelic. A number of parents of children at EME primary stages expressed an interest in their children accessing Gaelic (Learners) as part of Language Learning in Scotland A 1+2 Approach.

Response 11

All the primary schools within the ASG deliver the “1 + 2” languages initiative brought forward by the Scottish Government. At Ullapool Primary, pupils attending English Medium education learn Gaelic from P1 onwards and French from P5 on. At Badcaul and Scoraig Primaries, children learn French from P1 and Gaelic from P5.

At Achiltibuie Primary, pupils receive instruction in French and Gaelic and at Lochinver Primary the additional languages delivered are French, and British Sign Language. The decision on which languages to offer lies with the Head Teacher and can be based on existing expertise within the school.

Issue 12

A small minority of consultees highlighted that there is an area south of the Kylesku Bridge that is part of the Scourie Primary catchment area. These pupils transfer to Ullapool High School rather than Kinlochbervie High School, to which other pupils at Scourie Primary School transfer. In its final report, the council should clarify further the arrangements for Kylesku Bridge, should parents be requesting GME which is consistently progressive.

Response 12

The Scourie Primary School catchment is unusual in being split for the purposes of transfer to secondary school, with an area south of the Kylesku Bridge being part of the Ullapool High School catchment. The area is quite distant from Ullapool - the Kylesku Bridge itself is 32 miles away and the one-

way travel time is around 50 minutes. The area in question is also very sparsely populated. On balance the Council feels that all of the primary school age pupils in the Scourie Primary school catchment should be treated the same, and therefore we do not propose to include the area in question within the GM catchment of Ullapool Primary School.

7.0 Effects on the Community

7.1 The Proposal will not have any impact on the wider community.

8.0 Effects on School Transport

8.1 Travel arrangements are already in place for journeys to the designated GM schools, wherever there is demand. The proposals will clarify entitlement to this travel, and provision will be made according to normal criteria within these catchments.

9.0 Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements

9.1 The proposal is not expected to have any impact on staff and school management arrangements.

10.0 Alleged omissions or inaccuracies

10.1 There were two alleged inaccuracies.

10.2 The section of the Proposal Paper (Appendix 1) entitled "Publication Information" incorrectly listed Comunn na Gàidhlig as one of the organisations who would be formerly notified of the consultation.

10.3 One respondent highlighted that the Proposal Paper stated the travel distance between Ullapool and Achiltibuie is 32 minutes, but the average travelling time is actually 45 minutes. The school bus that makes stops to pick up children takes closer to 60 minutes.

10.4 The reference to a travel time of 32 minutes was a typing error and should have read 42 minutes: (Source: Google Maps)

10.5 The Council has carefully considered the impact of these inaccuracies on the Proposal but has concluded they do not represent a material consideration relevant to the Authority's decision as to implementation of the proposal. Bòrd na Gàidhlig were included as a statutory consultee as required by the legislation.

11.1 Overall Review of Consultation Exercise

11.1 Although some concern has been expressed about the potential negative effect on the rolls of local schools other than Ullapool Primary, these concerns have to be balanced against the Council's statutory duty to promote GME, and to allow access to GME for as many children as possible.

11.2 The concerns expressed by Bòrd na Gàidhlig have been addressed in correspondence and in discussions between Bòrd and Council officers.

11.3 Highland Council has carefully considered all the views expressed in consultation. The Council's responses are set out above, and its conclusion is set out at Section 13 below.

12.0 Legal issues

12.1 Throughout this statutory consultation Highland Council has complied in full with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

12.2 As provided for in section 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, it is the duty of the Council to ensure adequate and efficient provision of school education within Highland. The above, and all other legislative requirements, have been taken into account in the preparation of this Report.

13.0 Conclusion

13.1 The consultation process has complied fully with legislative requirements and has provided an opportunity for all parties to identify key issues of concern. These issues have been fully considered and the Council's response detailed in section 4 above.

13.2 The Education Scotland Inspectors visited Ullapool Primary School, Ullapool High School and the other primary schools within the ASG, to speak to parents, pupils and staff and gather a variety of views. Education Scotland also had the opportunity to review in detail the proposal document, all written responses, and the note of the public meeting.

13.3 The Director of Care and Learning, on reviewing all of the submissions, the note of the meeting, and the Education Scotland report; concludes that the Proposal to create a GM catchment area for Ullapool Primary School offers educational benefits and should be implemented. The GM catchment area should be the same as that set out in the Proposal Paper. The reasons for this conclusion are set out above.

14.0 Recommendation

14.1 It is therefore recommended that Highland Council proceeds with the course of action set out at Paragraph 13.3 above.

Sandra Campbell
Director of Care and Learning
24 April 2019

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

The proposal is to establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Ullapool Primary School

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS STATEMENT

THIS IS A PROPOSAL PAPER PREPARED IN TERMS OF THE EDUCATION AUTHORITY'S AGREED PROCEDURE TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010

INTRODUCTION

The Highland Council is proposing, subject to the outcome of the statutory consultation process:

- To establish a Gàidhlig Medium (GM) catchment area for Ullapool Primary School. The new catchment will overlay the current English Medium (EM) catchments of Ullapool Primary School, Achiltibuie Primary School, Badcaul Primary School, Lochinver Primary School, and Stoer Primary School. Particular arrangements will apply for transport to Ullapool from the latter four catchment areas
- To formalise the current arrangements relating to Gàidhlig Medium Education (GME) in Ullapool High School, under which the catchment area for Ullapool High School will apply to both Gàidhlig Medium and English Medium education.

Existing primary school catchments for the provision of English Medium education will be unaffected.

The proposed changes, if approved, will be implemented at the conclusion of the statutory consultation process.

If implemented as drafted, the proposed GM catchment for Ullapool Primary School will include all of the primary school catchments within the Ullapool ASG, except for that of Scoraig Primary School. The distances and travel times to Ullapool from the Scoraig catchment would make it impractical to include the peninsula within the GM catchment.

Any identified parental demand for local provision of GME from within the Scoraig catchment would be assessed in accordance with the Education (Scotland) Act 2016.

SUMMARY OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Proposal Paper Published

The proposal paper will be available for inspection, free of charge, at:

- Ullapool Primary School
- Achiltibuie Primary School
- Badcaul Primary School
- Lochinver Primary School
- Scoraig Primary School
- Ullapool Public Library

and published on the Highland Council website:

www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

Copies of this Proposal Paper are also available on request from:

Business Support Team
Care and Learning Service
Highland Council
Camaghael Hostel
Fort William
PH33 7NE
E-mail: Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk

To request this information in an alternative format, e.g. large print, Braille, audio formats, or suitable language, please also contact the Business Support Team, Care and Learning Service, Camaghael Hostel, Fort William PH33 7NE
E-mail: Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk

Formal notice of the Proposal and relevant information will be given and be made available, free of charge, to the consultees listed as follows:

- (i) Parents of pupils attending Ullapool Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (ii) Parents of pupils attending Achiltibuie Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (iii) Parents of pupils attending Badcaul Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (iv) Parents of pupils attending Lochinver Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (v) Parents of pupils attending Scoraig Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (vi) The Parent Councils of each of the above schools;

- (vii) All staff of the schools listed above.
- (viii) Members of Parliament and Members of the Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal;
- (ix) Trade union representatives;
- (x) All Community Councils for the areas covered by the Proposal;
- (xi) Bòrd na Gàidhlig;
- (xii) Comunn na Gàidhlig;
- (xiii) Education Scotland;
- (xvii) Highland Youth Convenor

Advertisement in Local Media

A notice announcing the public meeting will be placed in the *Ross-shire Journal* and on the Highland Council's Facebook page.

Consultation Period

The consultation for this Proposal will run from 29 October 2018 and will end on 10 December 2018. This period allows for the statutory minimum of six weeks, including at least thirty school days.

Public Meeting

A public meeting will be held, the details of which are set out below:

Ullapool Primary School, 12 November 2018 at 6.30pm.

Anyone wishing to attend the public meeting is invited to do so. The meeting will be convened by the Council, will be chaired by a senior elected councillor, and will be addressed by officers of the Care and Learning Service.

The meeting will be an opportunity for the public to hear more about the proposal; to ask questions about the proposal; and to have the views of all stakeholders recorded so that they can be taken into account. A note will be taken at the meeting of questions asked and views expressed. This note will be published on the Council website. The meeting will also be recorded.

The note will be forwarded to Education Scotland, along with other submissions and comments received by the Council during the consultation process.

Meetings with Pupils and Staff

School staff will arrange to discuss the proposal with pupils (who are considered to be of a suitable age and maturity) in the affected schools. A record of questions, responses and views will be taken and this will be published in the Consultation Report.

Responses to the Proposals

Interested parties are invited to respond to the Proposals by making written or electronic submissions on the Proposals to:

Ian Jackson
Education Officer (Resources)
Camaghael Hostel
Fort William
PH33 7NE
Email: Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk

Or via an online form, a link to which can be found on

www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

When responding, you are invited to state your relationship with the school – for example, “pupil”, “parent”, “carer”, “relative”, “former pupil”, “teacher in school”, “member of the community” etc. However it is not compulsory to do so.

Those sending in a response, whether by letter or electronically should know that their response will be open to public scrutiny and may have to be supplied to anyone making a reasonable request to see it. If they do not wish their response to be made publicly available, they should clearly write on the document: “I wish my response to be considered as confidential with access restricted to Councillors and Council Officers of Highland Council”. Otherwise, it will be assumed that the person making the response agrees to it being made publicly available. All written responses must be received by the last day of the consultation period, 10 December 2018 at 5.00pm.

Involvement of Education Scotland

When the Proposal Document is published, a copy will also be sent to Education Scotland by the Council. Education Scotland will also be sent, by 7 January 2019, a copy of any relevant written representations that are received by the Council from any person during the consultation period. Education Scotland will also receive the summary note of the public meeting that will be held and so far as is practicable a copy of any other relevant documentation. Education Scotland will then prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal not later than 25 January 2019. In preparing their report, Education Scotland may visit the affected schools and make such enquiries of people there as they consider appropriate.

Review of Consultation Exercise

Highland Council will review the proposal having regard to the Education Scotland Report, written representations that it has received, and oral representations made at the public meeting. It will then prepare a Consultation Report. This Report will be published in electronic and printed formats and will be sent to anyone who submitted a written representation during consultation. It will be available on the Council website as well as at the affected school and local library, free of charge. The Report will include a summary of the written and oral representations made during

consultation and a copy of the Education Scotland Report, together with the Council's considered response to the issues raised. The Report will include details of details of any alleged inaccuracies and/or omissions and how these have been handled. The Consultation Report will be published at least 3 weeks prior to being submitted to the Council's Care, Learning and Housing Committee, who will make a recommendation to the full Highland Council.

In publishing the report the Council will invite any person or party to make further representations to the Committee prior to its meeting. A notice to this effect will also be published on the Highland Council website.

At the present time the Council intends to publish its Report in March 2019 prior to submission to the Council's Care, Learning and Housing Committee in May or June 2019. However, this timescale may change depending on the nature of issues raised during consultation, and the need to give full consideration to those issues. In the latter event, the Report may not be submitted until a later Committee meeting.

Any proposal approved by the Care, Learning and Housing Committee would require to be confirmed by a subsequent meeting of the full Highland Council.

Note on Corrections

If any inaccuracy or omission is discovered in this Proposal paper, either by the Council or any other person, the Council will determine if relevant information has been omitted or, if the paper contains an inaccuracy. The Council will then take appropriate action, which may include the issue of a correction or the reissuing of the Proposal or the revision of the timescale for the consultation period, if appropriate. In that event, relevant consultees and HMI will be advised.

PROPOSAL

Legislative Background

- 1.1 The proposal is advanced within the context of all applicable legislation. Amongst other duties, education authorities are required to secure adequate and efficient provision of school education (S.1 of the Education Act 1980); to publish or otherwise make available information as to their arrangements for the placing of children in schools under their management (S.28 of the 1980 Act) and to promote and support Gaelic Medium education and learning (S.15 of The Education (Scotland) Act 2016. Statutory Guidance issued by Bòrd na Gàidhlig early in 2017 specifies that local authorities should establish catchment areas for Gàidhlig Medium education. The Guidance goes on to say that a catchment area for GME provision should be an area in which the education authority thinks it is reasonable for pupils wishing to receive GME provision to travel to school, and should have the potential to attract parents to choose GME provision for their children. Catchment areas for GME provision will normally overlay a number of school catchment areas.
- 1.2 In common with all public bodies in Scotland, the Highland Council also has a duty to provide Best Value. This includes making arrangements to secure continuous improvement in performance whilst maintaining an appropriate balance between quality and cost; and, in making those arrangements and securing that balance, to have regard to economy, efficiency, effectiveness, equal opportunities requirements and to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

Reason for the Proposal

- 2.1 This proposal is being advanced for the following reasons:
 - Highland Council has not previously specified catchment area for many of its schools offering GME. This has led to a lack of clarity for parents in respect of entitlement to GME, (see paragraph 2.2 below).
 - Bòrd na Gàidhlig has issued statutory guidance recommending that local authorities create catchment areas for GME.
- 2.2 The current criteria for providing transport to GME in Highland are not particularly well defined, and have evolved over time. The minimum distance and road safety criteria are the same as for English Medium education. The Council currently has an informal arrangement under which transport to GME can be provided “within reasonable travelling distance”. This has been generally interpreted as meaning up to 15 miles, but there are numerous variations.

Informal Consultation

- 3.1 Informal discussions have been held with the Head Teachers and Chairpersons of the Parent Councils of Ullapool Primary School, Achiltibuie Primary School; Badcaul Primary School; and Lochinver Primary School; and with local elected councillors. No opposition has been expressed.

Current and Planned Provision of Gàidhlig Medium Education within the Ullapool ASG

- 4.1 At secondary school level, Ullapool High School offers GME.
- 4.2 There are 6 primary schools within the ASG, one of which, Stoer Primary, is currently mothballed. Within the ASG, Ullapool Primary is the only school to offer GME at the primary stage.

Ullapool Primary School

- 5.1 Ullapool Primary is situated within the town of the same name. It has an extensive catchment area stretching from Aultguish in the south-east to Elphin and Ledmore in the north. There are presently 138 pupils in P1-7, 83 in EM and 55 in GM. There are also 26 children in the Nursery – 20 in GM and 6 in EM. A further 11 children are due to join the nursery during the course of session 2018-19, 9 in GM and 2 in EM. The school has spacious accommodation. The main building contains classrooms, offices, a medical room, the school hall, canteen and ASN facilities. The nursery classes are housed in self-contained accommodation. The school also has several demountable units used as a music room, art room, and meeting rooms. The extensive grounds include a playing field, wildlife garden and vegetable garden. Ullapool Drill Hall is immediately adjacent to the school, and pupils can also access the local swimming pool.
- 5.2 Gàidhlig Medium education was first established at Ullapool Primary in 1993 and was extended to nursery age pupils in 1999.

Proposed School Catchments for GME

- 6.1 The 5 other primary schools within the Ullapool ASG are located at some distance from Ullapool itself. Approximate travel distances and times to Ullapool Primary from the other schools are set out below:

Achiltibuie Primary – Ullapool Primary – 24 miles, 32 minutes travel time.

Badcaul Primary – Ullapool Primary – 31 miles, 47 minutes travel time.

Lochinver Primary – Ullapool Primary – 30 miles, 57 minutes travel time.

Stoer Primary – Ullapool Primary – 42 miles, 73 minutes travel time.

- 6.2 The community of Scoraig is not connected to the national road network. Secondary school pupils from Scoraig are transported by charter boat across Little Loch Broom on a Monday morning and Friday afternoon, where they link with a bus to Ullapool High School. During the school term the pupils stay in a school residence in Ullapool from Monday evening to Friday morning.
- 6.3 Since even secondary age pupils from Scoraig are unable to travel daily to Ullapool, it would not be practical to include Scoraig within the GME catchment for Ullapool Primary School.
- 6.4 The statutory guidance specifies that a catchment area for GME provision should be an area in which the education authority thinks it is reasonable for pupils wishing to receive GME provision to travel to school, and should have the potential to attract parents to choose GME provision for their children.
- 6.5 The distances involved in the Ullapool ASG are undoubtedly something of a deterrent to parents in the other schools enrolling their children into GME at Ullapool PS. Nevertheless, currently there are 3 pupils in this category, and there have been others in the past.
- 6.6 The Council is sympathetic to the idea that Gàidhlig Medium Education should be accessible as many pupils Highland as possible, provided it is practical and reasonable to provide access.
- 6.7 The Council therefore proposes that the GM catchment for Ullapool Primary will overlay the English Medium catchments of Achiltibuie, Badcaul, Lochinver Stoer and Ullapool Primaries, but with restrictions on transport as set out below.
- 6.8 In considering the principles of Best Value – see paragraph 1.2 above - Highland Council has noted that to provide dedicated transport from the areas covered by the Achiltibuie, Badcaul, Lochinver and Stoer catchments could result in an unacceptably high level of additional cost to the taxpayer.
- 6.9 The Council therefore proposes that the provision of school transport from the catchment areas of Achiltibuie, Badcaul, Lochinver and Stoer Primaries to GME at Ullapool Primary will be on the basis of utilising the existing transport for Ullapool High School. Dedicated transport by taxi or minibus will not be provided.
- 6.6 The map at **Appendix 2** shows the current school catchments for the Ullapool ASG (outlined in red), with the proposed GM catchment outlined in blue.
- 6.7 No changes are proposed for these catchments in respect of English Medium education.
- 6.8 For the purposes of GME, the Ullapool High School catchment will be the same as the school's existing catchment.

Educational Benefits

- 7.1 The Proposal forms part of Highland Council's overall approach to the promotion of Gàidhlig medium education. Up to now, Highland Council's admission arrangements to GME have been informal and based on a "reasonable distance" (often applied as a 15 mile radius) from each school offering GME. In some locations these radii have overlapped, and the "15 mile" principle has not always been applied consistently. The creation of GM catchment areas, extended throughout Highland, will mean that admissions to GME will in future be more formal and robust.
- 7.2 The Proposal therefore helps to consolidate our existing provision of GME, and allows for the more efficient use of resources. It should be considered alongside other measures being undertaken to promote Gaelic and the benefits of bilingualism.

Effects on School Transport

- 8.1 Within the Ullapool Primary School catchment, pupils attending GME are offered school transport on the same basis as children attending English Medium education. Paragraph 6.9 above explains why no other effects on school transport are anticipated.

Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements

- 9.1 Because of the long distances involved in travelling from the other catchments into Ullapool, the Council does not expect any significant impact on school rolls. Nor do we expect any impact on staff within the schools of the Ullapool ASG.

Effect on the Local Communities

- 10.1 The proposal is not expected to have any impact on the wider local community.

Recommendation

- 11.1 Highland Council recommends the adoption of a Gàidhlig Medium catchment area for Ullapool Primary School, along the lines set out in this paper.
- 11.2 This consultation paper is issued in terms of the authority's procedures to meet the relevant statutory requirements. Following the consultation period, a report and submissions received will be presented to the Care, Learning and Housing Committee of the Highland Council.

Ullapool GM Catchment Area

Showing Primary Catchment Boundaries

- Key: Ullapool GM Catchment area is within the blue line ———
- Ordinary Primary Catchment areas are shown in red ———



**List of Respondents to Statutory Consultation Exercise – Creation of Gaelic
Medium Catchment Area for Ullapool Primary School**

1. Catherine MacKenzie
2. Tim Loftus
3. Kenneth and Sandra MacLeod
4. Julia Campbell
5. Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Fiona Livingstone

From: Catherine van Mackenzie <cathy2362@hotmail.com>
Sent: 29 October 2018 17:05
To: Education Consultations; Norma Young
Subject: Gaelic Medium catchment area Ullapool

Categories: C&L LOCHABER ADMIN

Dear Mr Jackson,

Today I received a letter from the Highland Council directing my attention to a proposal to enlarge the Ullapool catchment area for Gaelic Medium.

My 2 children attend primary school in Achiltibuie, hence my interest in the matter.

- You state in your proposal that the travel distance between Ullapool and Achiltibuie is 32 minutes. It would be great if that was the case but the average travelling time is 45 minutes. The school bus that makes stops to pick up children takes closer to 60 minutes.
- You also state that this proposal will have no consequences for the area. That seems naive. To me this seems a first step towards enlarging the Ullapool catchment area for both Gaelic and English education in order to close the smaller schools in the various villages around Ullapool; in my opinion very much a step in the wrong direction. Closing local schools is a move towards creating ghost villages on the west coast and killing the community. If learning Gaelic is really such an essential skill for Achiltibuie children, then why not teach it as a second language in much the same way as French is being taught now?
- The idea that 5 to 12 year old children benefit from spending 2 hours on a school bus on a daily basis is ridiculous. I personally will not allow my children to spend that much time travelling when they should be playing.

So my reaction is short: no thank you.

I look forward to a change of direction in your policy and a turn towards more supportive action for small schools,

Catherine Mackenzie

Fiona Livingstone

From: School consultation <donotreply@highland.gov.uk>
Sent: 29 October 2018 22:37
To: Education Consultations
Subject: Ullapool Primary consultation comments

Categories: C&L LOCHABER ADMIN

Privacy notice:

Confirmation
Ticking this box indicates that you have read the privacy notice

Name of consultation: Ullapool Primary

Your comments: I think this is much riskier than indicated in consultation papers. The small schools in the proposed catchment are extremely vulnerable to even minor reductions in pupil numbers. Whilst the distances involved are expected to limit the number of children travelling to Ullapool for primary GME, many other factors (friends, perceived better schooling, etc.) may prove more powerful motivators towards moving. The impact of a school dwindling in numbers (and potentially closing) on a village (for instance Lochinver) is really bad.

Whilst I support the move to offer GME to all primary pupils in the area, the GM provision should be at the local schools, or risk the loss of those schools and the subsequent harm to the communities they serve.

Upload documents or letters :

I am commenting as: Parent

I am commenting on behalf of:

Name:

Title	First name	Last name
Mr	Tim	Loftus

Address:

postcode_search	Choose address	Did you find the address on the list above?
IV26 2SZ	Port Aluinn Cottage Ullapool IV26 2SZ	Yes

Email address: boatbuildertim@hotmail.com

Fiona Livingstone

From: Sandra MACLEOD <sandra.lamont2@btinternet.com>
Sent: 12 November 2018 06:17
To: Education Consultations
Subject: Proposal to Establish Gaelic Medium Catchment area for UPS

Categories: C&L LOCHABER ADMIN

We have read the proposal paper online. While it would be interesting to hear how this idea would work in practice, we are unable to attend the meeting tonight.

However, we are not interested in our children receiving any form of Gaelic Education because they are already learning French and BSL in Lochinver Primary School and have both shown interest in learning Spanish.

We would be keen for consideration of BSL provision in Ullapool High School as for the last few years, pupils have left Lochinver Primary School with a solid foundation in BSL but have had no opportunity to continue or advance their education at secondary level.

We hope our comments will be noted and considered as part of the wider discussion on education within the ASG.

Kenneth & Sandra MacLeod

Sent from my iPad

Fiona Livingstone

From: School consultation <donotreply@highland.gov.uk>
Sent: 21 November 2018 13:17
To: Education Consultations
Subject: Ullapool Primary consultation comments

Categories: C&L LOCHABER ADMIN

Privacy notice:

Confirmation
Ticking this box indicates that you have read the privacy notice

Name of consultation: Ullapool Primary

Your comments: I am concerned about the consequences for little schools like ours in Achiltibuie if children are lured away to Ullapool by the attraction of Gaelic medium education. It's obviously very popular in Ullapool as there is much bigger intake to the GM class than the mainstream one. Is there any reason to suppose that Achiltibuie parents are any less enthusiastic about Gaelic than their Ullapool contemporaries? But while they may be interested in Gaelic education for their children I imagine most would balk at the idea of sending young children on a 50 mile round trip: most of it on a single track twisty road. My 13 yr old struggles with spending 15 hours a week travelling: away from home before 7.30am, not home till after 5pm. It's a long and tiring day. And small children often don't travel well. I imagine most parents would weigh up the pros and cons and conclude that it wasn't really worth the potential daily misery of travel sickness whatever the lingual benefits might be. So it's not really much of a choice.

In Achiltibuie Primary School there are several parents who don't drive themselves - making the prospect of their children being in Ullapool and hard to reach if there is even a minor emergency a worry. And then there are the after school activities. I struggle with that one as a UHS parent. How do they get home if their parents don't have a car? There are no buses other than the school run. I spend hours of my time in parent taxi role - and it's not cheap! I intended to come to the public meeting in Ullapool, but with a busy week already involving several trips to and from Ullapool for after school activities, I was unable to face another one. I had offered some of the non-drivers a lift, but as their attendance hinged on me, none of us could come.

There seems no doubt that the benefits of Gaelic medium education are clear and there are many enthusiastic supporters. It's just a great shame that it's all or more or less nothing. And the "all" is centralised in Ullapool. It's not really a choice for parents: most can't really send their children to Ullapool. And if they did, it could spell disaster for our little school here. I believe small schools are also an important part of Highland cultural heritage - and they're struggling and need support if this way of life has any future. It's a pity more Gaelic isn't available in our remote, Highland, crofting community. There's an irony there somewhere! Though I understand the children do currently get a flavour at the primary school here along with French. I'm all for languages of all sorts being introduced at an early age. and if Gaelic is acknowledged to be so important, why isn't there more on offer here? It's a topsy-turvy situation where learners have to go to the towns and cities for Gaelic, leaving little communities like Coigach behind and in the process adding to the depopulation that many of us are fighting against. We even have a Gaelic teacher who travels back and forth to Ullapool to teach children there and there are currently a couple of children who attend school in Ullapool - if they went to the local school here, it would make a big difference to its

viability.

I know it will all boil down to budget. I don't think any of us expect a Gaelic medium unit in Achiltibuie. I'm not even certain how many would opt for it. However, it does seem cynical to offer Gaelic as a "choice", but only if you can get to Ullapool. Surely the option to have Gaelic on offer in Coigach would be a happier prospect for families here? Or does Highland Council hope that the Gaelic carrot dangled in Ullapool will do away with the need for inconvenient little schools out in the wilds? It's a thought that crossed my mind.

Upload documents or letters :

I am commenting as: Local resident

I am commenting on behalf of:

Name:

Title	First name	Last name
Ms	Julia	Campbell

Address:

postcode_search	Choose address	Did you find the address on the list above?
IV26 2YL	Lower Achininver Achiltibuie IV26 2YL	Yes

Email address: croftercampbell@live.co.uk

<p>Freagairt Bhòrd na Gàidhlig airson Co-chomhairleachadh air Sgìre-sgoile airson Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig ann an Ulapul aig Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd</p>	<p>Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Response on the Highland Council Consultation on GME Catchment Area for Ullapool</p>
<p>1. Ro-ràdh</p> <p>Tha Bòrd na Gàidhlig a' cur fàilte air an iomairt gus sgìre-sgoile a chur air bhonn airson Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig ann an sgìre Ulapuil. Tha am Bòrd ag aithneachadh gu bheil Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd a' gluasad gu sgìrean-sgoile airson FtG a stèidheachadh air feadh sgìre na Comhairle.</p> <p>Tha Am Plana Cànan Nàiseanta Gàidhlig 2018-23 agus an Stiùireadh Reachdail airson Foghlam Gàidhlig mar bhunait airson na freagairt seo. San Stiùireadh Reachdail, far a bheil barrachd mìneachaidh air na ceumannan seo, 's e bunait na cùise gun tig adhartas is fàs air Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig.</p>	<p>1. Introduction</p> <p>Bòrd na Gàidhlig welcomes the initiative to establish a school catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in the Ullapool area. The Bòrd recognises that Highland Council is moving to the establishment of catchment areas where there is existing GME provision in the Council's area.</p> <p>The Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education and the National Gaelic Language Plan 2018-23 form the basis for the Bòrd's response to this consultation. The Statutory Guidance, where there is further detail on the steps involved, has as its basis that GME should develop and grow.</p>
<p>2. Fiosrachadh sa Cho-chomhairleachadh</p> <p>Tha Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd ag ràdh gu bheil iad airson sgìre-sgoile a stèidheachadh airson nan adhbharan a leanas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tha an Stiùireadh Reachdail a' moladh gun tèid sin a chur air dòigh; • Tha mì-chinnt ann a thaobh sgìrean-sgoile airson FtG a tha a' ciallachadh nach eil pàrantan cinnteach dè 's urrain dhaibh fhaighinn airson an cuid chloinne; agus • Tha cleachdadh aig a' Chomhairle gum bi iad a' libhrigeadh còmh-dhail taobh a-staigh sgìre a tha reusanta agus gu h-àbhaisteach tha seo a' ciallachadh nas lugha de 15 mìltean airson 'turas gu sgoil'. 	<p>2. Consultation Information</p> <p>The Highland Council says they want to establish a catchment area for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Statutory Guidance recommends that one be developed; • There is lack of clarity for parents about the entitlement to GME for their children; and • The Council has used the practice of providing transport within a reasonable travelling distance and generally this has been understood to mean within 15 miles of the school.
<p>3. Moladh aig a' Chomhairle</p> <p>Tha Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd a' moladh gun tèid sgìre-sgoile FtG a stèidheachadh air an aon bhunait mar 'Associated School Group' airson Àrd-</p>	<p>3. Council Recommendation</p> <p>The Highland Council recommends that a GMC district be established on the same basis as the 'Associated School Group' for Ullapool High</p>

<p>sgoil Ulapuil; Achd Ille Bhuidhe, Loch an Inbhir, An Stòr agus Bada Call ach a-mhàin Sgoraig air sgath 's gu bheil a' Chomhairle den bheachd gu bheil e ro fhada air falbh.</p> <p>Tha am pàipear a' mìneachadh nan uairean siubhail agus nam mìltean eadar gach sgoil agus Bun-sgoil Ulapuil aig 6.1: <i>Achiltibuie Primary - Ullapool Primary - 24 miles, 32 minutes travel time¹.</i> <i>Badcaul Primary - Ullapool Primary- 31 miles, 47 minutes travel time.</i> <i>Lochinver Primary- Ullapool Primary - 30 miles, 57 minutes travel time.</i> <i>Stoer Primary - Ullapool Primary - 42 miles, 73 minutes travel time.</i></p> <p>Cuideachd, aig 6.9, tha a' Chomhairle ag ràdh gu bheil e soilleir gum feum clann sam bith a dhol air a' bhus a tha ann airson sgoilearan na h-àrd-sgoile. <i>6.9 The Council therefore proposes that the provision of school transport from the catchment areas of Achiltibuie, Badcaul, Lochinver and Stoer Primaries to GME at Ullapool Primary will be on the basis of utilising the existing transport for Ullapool High School. Dedicated transport by taxi or minibus will not be provided.</i></p>	<p>School; This is defined as including Achiltibuie, Lochinver, Storr and Badcaul, as well as Ullapool, but excluding Scoraig because the Council believes it is too far away.</p> <p>The consultation paper lists the time and distance between each school and Ullapool Primary School at 6.1: Achiltibuie Primary - Ullapool Primary - 24 miles, 32 minutes travel time². Badcaul Primary - Ullapool Primary- 31 miles, 47 minutes travel time. Lochinver Primary- Ullapool Primary - 30 miles, 57 minutes travel time. Stoer Primary - Ullapool Primary - 42 miles, 73 minutes travel time.</p> <p>Also, at 6.9, the Council clearly says that children must use the bus which is provided for high school pupils. <i>6.9 The Council therefore proposes that the provision of school transport from the catchment areas of Achiltibuie, Badcaul, Lochinver and Stoer Primaries to GME at Ullapool Primary will be on the basis of utilising the existing transport for Ullapool High School. Dedicated transport by taxi or minibus will not be provided.</i></p>
<p>4. Stiùireadh Reachdail airson Foghlam Gàidhlig</p> <p>Tha moladh san Stiùireadh Reachdail airson Foghlam Gàidhlig gun tèid sgìrean-sgoile a stèidheachadh airson sgoiltean far a bheil foghlam tron Ghàidhlig (FtG) (Earrainnean 2.53 & 2.54).</p> <p><i>Sgìrean-sgoile FtG is Stiùireadh airson Àiteachan a Ghleidheadh do Sgoilearan</i> <i>Bu chòir do dh'ùghdarrasan foghlaim sgìrean-sgoile a stèidheachadh airson FtG, agus dh'fhaodadh gum bi iad ag iarraidh beachdachadh air an iartas a th' ann airson FtG nuair a tha iad a' stèidheachadh stiùireadh airson nan àiteachan a thèid a ghleidheadh do sgoilearan ann am FtG.</i></p> <p>Mar sin, tha Bòrd na Gàidhlig a' cur fàilte air a' mholadh gun tèid Sgìre-sgoile a stèidheachadh airson Bun-sgoil Ulapuil far a bheil FtG ri fhaighinn.</p>	<p>4. Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education</p> <p>The Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education recommends that catchment areas are established for schools where Gaelic-medium education (GME) is provided (Section 2.53 & 2.54).</p> <p>GME Catchment Areas and Placing Guidelines</p> <p><i>Education authorities should establish catchment areas for GME provision, and may wish to consider demand for GME when setting guidelines for placing pupils in GME provision.</i></p> <p>Therefore, Bòrd na Gàidhlig welcomes the recommendation that a catchment area will be established for Ullapool Primary School where there is GME provision.</p>

¹ Tha AA Route Planner a' sealltainn gum biodh an turas eadar an dà àite mu 46 mionaidean, seach 32.

² AA Route Planner shows that the journey time between the two places would be 46 minutes, not 32.

<p>Ach, tha an Stiùireadh cuideachd ag ràdh: <i>2.54 Bu chòir do sgìre-sgoile airson sgoil le FBG a bhith na sgìre far a bheil an t-ùghdarras foghlaim den bheachd gu bheil e reusanta do chloinn san sgìre sin, a tha airson a dhol gu FBG, siubhal don sgoil, agus bu chòir san sgìre sin gum bi cothrom ann pàrantan a thàladh gu bhith cur an cuid chloinne gu FtG. Mar as trice, bidh sgìrean-sgoile airson sgoiltean a tha tabhann FtG a' gabhail a-steach grunn sgìrean-sgoile airson sgoiltean eile.</i></p> <p>Tha dà phuing taobh a-staigh na h-earrainn sin a tha cudromach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Gu bheil e reusanta do chloinn san sgìre sin siubhal don sgoil, agus b) Gum bi cothrom ann pàrantan a thàladh gu bhith cur an cuid chloinne gu FtG. <p>Tha Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd a' dèanamh tomhas air astar agus ùine-siubhail mu choinneamh gach bun-sgoil eile a bhiodh taobh a-staigh na sgìre-sgoile seo. Tha am Bòrd den bheachd nach eil na h-astaran sin no na h-uairean siubhail 'reusanta' idir airson cloinne aig aois bun-sgoile agus gu sònraichte nuair nach bi dòigh shiubhail ann ach ann am bus le sgoilearan àrd-sgoile. Ach, cha bhiodh am Bòrd airson gum biodh sgoilearan a tha ann am Bun-sgoil Ulapuill an-dràsta a' call a' chothruim sin agus bu chòir dhan Chomhairle seo a ghleidheadh dhaibh gus am bi FtG san sgìre aca fhèin.</p> <p>Tha am Bòrd den bheachd gu bheil am moladh, mar a tha e, a' dol an aghaidh an stiùiridh gum bi cothrom ann pàrantan a thàladh gu bhith cur an cuid chloinne gu FtG san coimhearsnachdan aca.</p> <p>Tha an Stiùireadh ag ràdh gum bi e àbhaisteach gun tèid sgìrean-sgoile còmhla ach 's ann airson bhailtean is bailtean mòra a bhiodh sin cumanta.</p>	<p>However, the Guidance also says: 2.54 A catchment area for GME provision should be an area in which the education authority thinks it is reasonable for pupils wishing to receive GME provision to travel to school, and should have the potential to attract parents to choose GME provision for their children. Catchment areas for GME provision will normally overlay a number of school catchment areas.</p> <p>There are two points within this section that are important:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) For children within the area, travel to school should be reasonable, and b) There is an opportunity to attract parents to chose GME provision for their children. <p>The Highland Council has provided information on distance and travel time for each of the primary schools within the proposed catchment area. The Bòrd considers that these distances and times are not 'reasonable' for primary-age children, and especially when the transport provision would be a bus shared with high school pupils. However, the Bòrd would not wish any pupils who currently travel to Bun-sgoil Ulapuill to be disadvantaged and so recommend that the opportunity to enter GME is retained until alternative provision is available locally.</p> <p>The Bòrd is further of the view that the proposal is contrary to the Guidance in that it reduces the opportunity to attract parents to choose GME provision for their children in their communities.</p> <p>The suggestion that catchment areas will normally overlay a number of school catchment areas applies particularly to urban areas.</p>
<p>5. Am Plana Cànan Nàiseanta Gàidhlig 2018-23</p> <p>Dh'fhoillsich Riaghaltas na h-Alba Am Plana Cànan Nàiseanta Gàidhlig 2018-23 sa Mhàrt am-bliadhna. 'S e fear de na trì prìomhachasan sa Phlana gun tèid fàs a thoirt air ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig agus tha FtG air a chomharrachadh mar chuspair airson</p>	<p>5. The National Gaelic Language Plan 2018-23</p> <p>The Scottish Government published the National Gaelic Language Plan 2018-23 in March this year. One of the three priorities in the Plan is to increase the learning of Gaelic and GME is highlighted as an area for growth. In the</p>

fàs. Ann am beachd a' Bhùird, cha bhiodh am moladh aig Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd a' cur ri cothroman gus FtG fhaighinn no fàs ann am FtG.

Bhiodh am Bòrd toilichte a bhith ag obair leis a' Chomhairle, mar chompàirt, gus a bhith a' beachdachadh ann am barrachd doimhneachd air na molaidhean gus dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil fuasgladh ri fhaighinn a bhiodh a' coileanadh amasan na Comhairle gus sgìrean-sgoile reusanta a stèidheachadh agus structaran a bhios a' tarraing barrachd dhaoine gu FtG.

Bòrd's view the proposed catchment area for Ullapool Primary School would not support the availability and growth of GME.

The Bòrd will be happy to engage with the Council, as a partner, in further reflection on the proposals to ensure a solution is found which delivers the Council's aims of both creating reasonable catchments and catchment structures which continue to attract an increasing uptake of GME.

CONSULTATION MEETING – GAELIC MEDIUM CATCHMENT AREA FOR ULLAPOOL PRIMARY SCHOOL

HELD AT ULLAPOOL PRIMARY SCHOOL – 12 NOVEMBER 2018 – 6.30pm

MINUTES OF MEETING

Panel

Cllr. Fiona Robertson - Chairperson
Brian Porter, Head of Resources
Ian Jackson, Education Officer, Resources;
Coinneach Morrison, Gaelic Education Officer

Also Attending

Eva Faber, Head Teacher, Ullapool Primary School
Sandy Burr, Head Teacher, Badcaul and Scoraig Primary Schools
Dolina Grant, Gaelic Community Learning and Development Officer
David Crook, PT Modern Languages, Ullapool High School

In addition, 5 members of the public attended.

Cllr. Robertson welcomed everyone and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposal to formally establish a Gaelic Medium Catchment for Ullapool Primary School, as set out in the recommendation to the proposal Paper. She asked whether anyone needed another copy of the paper. (Copies were distributed).

The proposal had been issued as a result of Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Medium Education, produced by Bòrd na Gàidhlig. Cllr. Robertson continued by introducing those on the panel, and asked Brian Porter to explain the background and context to tonight's meeting, and the consultation process.

Mr Porter advised that, as a result of the Statutory Guidance that Cllr. Robertson mentioned, the Council was going through a process of establishing Gaelic Medium (GM) catchments throughout Highland. The whole process will probably take a couple of years to complete, due to the lengthy nature of the process (9/10 months) that is required in each case. The positive aspect is that there is plenty of opportunity for comments to be made, and we are genuinely looking for comments. We don't have all the answers and we need input from local communities to shape our decision. It is sometimes suggested that consultations are not genuine and that Highland Council has already made up its mind, but that's not the case. There have

been a number of recent cases where the Council's final decision following consultation has been different from that originally proposed.

The process requires the Council to hold a formal consultation over a period of at least 30 school days. Mr Porter encouraged everyone present to make a contribution tonight, and to submit written representations as well. These would help inform the Council's decision. Also, if anyone was unclear on any aspect, they could ask questions, either tonight or in writing. The Council must reply to any issues raised in the public consultation before coming to a final decision. After the end of the public consultation, there will be a further 3 week consultation with Education Scotland, who will examine the educational merits of the proposal.

After the Council has taken stock of all the responses, and the Report by Education Scotland, we will publish our Final Report at least 3 weeks before that is submitted to Council Committee. Further representations may be made during that 3 week period. Tonight is therefore not the only opportunity to comment. Parents and other members of the public can rest assured that any points they make will be given due consideration.

The Chairperson then asked Ian Jackson to set out the educational benefits of the proposal.

Mr Jackson commented that Highland Council undertakes statutory consultations when it proposes to make significant changes to school provision, and normally such proposals are advanced on the basis of educational benefit. In this case it was a little different as the Council was responding to Statutory Guidance issued by Bòrd na Gàidhlig, which specified that the Council should set up GM catchment areas for schools that offer Gàidhlig medium education (GME). So the Council has to set up a GM catchment. What was more up for debate is its extent. He referred to the map at the back of the Proposal Paper, which set out the proposed GM catchment. Essentially this was proposed as the whole of the Ullapool High School catchment with the exception of the Scoraig PS catchment. Scoraig had been omitted for logistical reasons - it isn't really possible for children from that community to travel daily to Ullapool. In terms of educational benefit, in the past there has been a "custom and practice" arrangement in respect of any children who wanted to attend Gaelic Medium education from outwith the Ullapool Primary catchment itself. There has been an informal arrangement across Highland that pupils wishing to attend Gaelic Medium Education would receive transport if they lived within 15 miles of a school that offered GME, but that rule has never been consistently applied and has often been dependent on issues like location, such as in Ullapool, where the primary school is located close to the High School and children wishing to travel to the primary school for GME have the option of using the High School bus. That option isn't available in every area.

In summary, the education benefit would be that we're giving clarity to parents in respect of GME, making clear where entitlement exists and where it doesn't exist, and that's an improvement on the existing arrangements based on custom and practice.

The Chairperson then explained that Mr Porter, Mr Jackson and Mr Morrison were available to answer questions.

Questions and Answers

Q1 – (David Crook) – Just a factual point, on page 7 there's a statement that at secondary school level Ullapool High offers GME. Ullapool High offers Gàidhlig and Gaelic for learners but no other subjects are offered through the medium of Gàidhlig. We would like to offer more subjects but it's difficult to get staff who have Gaelic to teach in the language, or to recruit staff who have Gaelic.

A1 (Ian Jackson) – My understanding is that if a school offers even just Gaelic through the medium of Gàidhlig, then it would be classed as offering GME, but I take the point you are making.

(Coinneach Morrison) – Provision is varied across the Authority, and it would be useful to work towards a core group of subjects that we can deliver through Gàidhlig, but there are challenges in terms of recruiting the staff for that.

Q2 – I have heard fears expressed from some of the outlying areas that this provision might result in falling school rolls in the smaller schools. What are your thoughts on the prospect that a rural school might end up losing a teacher because some pupils have left the village school to attend GME in Ullapool?

A2 (Brian Porter) – That's a perfectly valid concern. There is a balancing act here. The catchment area is being proposed in accordance with the Statutory Guidance, and the Council is seeking to encourage GME. We absolutely want to sustain our small schools but we also have a statutory duty to promote and support GME. Ultimately this will be a matter of parental choice.

Q3 (Follow-up) – You could have a scenario in which 5 children were travelling from Achiltibuie to access GME in Ullapool, and as a result Achiltibuie was no longer a 2-teacher school. How do you square that circle?

A3 (Brian Porter) – We've done a number of these consultations across Highland and often the questions posed have been on both sides of the coin. We are sometimes challenged because we haven't made the GM catchment wide enough, and we are asked why we haven't included catchments that are maybe at the limit of

reasonable travelling distance. Equally, for each of those comments we get another making the points you have made, which is about how providing access to GME can affect the viability of smaller schools. I'm not sure there's a right or wrong answer. It's a difficult balancing act, but I would encourage you to put your concerns to us in writing. We will reflect on all the points made.

(Eva Faber) – All I would say is that we already have children coming through from Achiltibuie to GME in Ullapool. That arrangement has been going for over 20 years, and I don't see that this proposal will necessarily increase the number. The new Proposal will just make things easier for parents. In the past parents wishing to enrol their children in GME from Achiltibuie had to submit a placing request, and a transport request. These made things difficult for parents and were almost like barriers to GME. At one point we had a parent who was told that transport would not be paid and they were having to fund transport for their child to attend GME. We did argue that point and eventually transport was agreed, but there was certainly a glitch which led to that parent being told she didn't qualify for transport. This Proposal would clarify that. In the past other children have come from the Badcaul catchment, so it is something that has been happening for many years. It would be nice for parents not to have to jump through all the hoops they have had to up to now.

Q4 – What would happen if the GM classes at Ullapool reached saturation point?

A4 (Eva Faber) – The way the staffing works is that once the number of pupils reaches a certain level you get another teacher. If the whole ASG decided to come to Ullapool then that might be an issue with space, but I can't see that happening. Most parents prefer to keep their children within their local community. Generally what happens is that as the numbers in GM increase the numbers in EM decrease, but the school keeps the same overall number of pupils.

Q5 – As a follow on to the last question, the school needs and is waiting on a new nursery, and there are new houses being built in Ullapool. Will the school be able to cope if the pupil numbers grow?

A5 (Brian Porter) – I'm sure many people will be aware of the financial challenges facing the Council, but capacity within schools is the one issue we can't shy away from, and that is made clear in the reports we prepare for elected councillors. There may be things we would like to do in terms of the condition and suitability of our schools, but the one thing we have to do is make sure there is enough space for the children we have in our schools. The Council has a legal responsibility to make sure there is enough space in our schools to educate children, so in a time of declining capital resource that almost becomes the number one criterion for the allocation of funding.

Q6 (Follow-up) – So that might allow the school to be allocated specific staffing for subjects like art and music? Some of that has been restricted since the budget restrictions came in, so could this be a way of recovering staff for those subjects, if the school roll increased?

A6 (Coinneach Morrison) – The model for how that kind of staffing is provided is really done on a case by case basis, and the driver behind it is something called Class Contact Reduction time, or CCR. Teachers who have a full timetable are entitled to 2.5 hours per week away from the classroom. What's delivered by the teachers who provide that cover will vary according to the teacher's own skill set. A Head Teacher will have a professional conversation with his or her staff about who will be delivering what, taking into account each teacher's skill set. I would say that is quite a separate issue from GME, in that the entitlement to CCR will be the same for each teacher and that is what drives the funding.

Q7 – (Follow-up) – So an increase in the number of teachers might lead to an increase in CCR? We used to have an art teacher and that was great. If the community could see this proposal as a way of increasing the provision of that kind of subject, it might make it more attractive. It's quite hard for us as parents to understand the machinations of the Education system.

A7 (Ian Jackson) – I don't think this proposal will lead to a very large increase in the number of children at Ullapool Primary. The rural schools in the Ullapool High School cluster have really suffered from declining rolls, as was mentioned earlier. Both Badcaul and Achiltibuie are now single teacher schools. Lochinver's roll is now in the high 30s whereas even a few years ago it was in the high 40s, whilst Stoer has shrivelled away to nothing at the moment. If you take even the total combined roll of Badcaul and Achiltibuie you have only around 20 pupils, so the maximum number opting for GM is going to be no more than a proportion of that twenty, and probably a small proportion. Whilst Lochinver has a slightly larger roll, the distance from Lochinver to Ullapool will I think be a disincentive for parents who might otherwise have thought about GME. I don't really see the GM catchment proposals having a big impact on the number of children at Ullapool Primary, and even if it did there wouldn't be direct relationship between the type of thing you mention and GME. I think that Ullapool Primary itself has had a declining roll over the last decade or so?

(Eva Faber) – Yes, by quite a lot.

(Ian Jackson) - So the problem in this school cluster has been falling numbers, rather than increased numbers.

(Eva Faber) – When I started at Ullapool Primary we had over 170 in the school and we were had about 200 children once you took the nursery into account. The High School has had the same problem.

(David Crook) – Yes, we're down to about 200 now.

Q8 – Could I go back to the Statutory Guidance and the Act and parental rights to request GME? If we establish this catchment area that takes in Achiltibuie and Lochinver, does that mean that parents would never have the opportunity to request GME in their own local schools, even if a majority of parents in the other schools wanted GME to be offered locally? We can look at Bunessan, where last year 100% of the children entering P1 – 3 pupils – had parents who wanted GME. They have GME now, and they have a teacher. That would be the answer to the concerns about children draining away from Achiltibuie, if a majority of parents there wanted GME in the local school.

A8 - (Ian Jackson) – We've been looking at Guideline figure of 4-5 for assessing GMPE in a locality, although it is only a Guideline.

Q9 (Follow-up) – Normally there are only one or two children entering P1 in Achiltibuie each year, so let's say there were two and they both wanted Gaelic?

A9 (Ian Jackson) – The Act commits us to looking at these requests although as you know it doesn't commit us to acting on them. If there was a genuine request we would consider it in accordance with the Guidance. We do have problems with staffing GM provision, and the numbers would be a factor, but we would have to consider it.

(Coinneach Morrison) Absolutely! The Guidance is very clear that if a request is made we would have to look at it within the timeframe set out, but sustainability is something we would have to take into account. It's my job to ensure there is growth in GM education, but it has to be in a sustainable manner.

Q10 (Follow up) – It would be one way of keeping children in their local primaries, if they did not have to travel to Ullapool for GME. You do acknowledge in the consultation document that distance may be a deterrent to children taking up GME. Achiltibuie isn't too bad but Lochinver is a long journey.

A10 (Ian Jackson) - I think Eva has said there are pupils from Inchnadamph that have travelled but no further.

(Eva Faber) They are in the nursery at present for a couple of days a week, and the parents are travelling down from Inchnadamph. However once those children go into school I'm assuming they will enrol in Lochinver.

Q11 (Eva Faber) – Would parents have the option of a split placement between GME in Ullapool and also attending their local school?

A11 (Ian Jackson) – I don't think that would be possible. Nursery is different, as you say, because the Scottish Government's philosophy for pre-school is very much based around flexibility and parental choice. However I don't think it's possible for children to be enrolled in more than one school at one time.

(Coinneach Morrison) - From the point of view of continuity that would be very undesirable.

(Ian Jackson) – We have in the past had requests for part-time school education from children who have been home educated. Scottish Government Guidance leaves this decision up to local authorities. We have sometimes accommodated such requests since as an education authority we prefer it when children are in school and we regard part-time school education as better than no school education at all. I think it unlikely though that the Council would ever agree to children being enrolled in two different schools at the same time.

Q12 – (David Crook) – Looking at different scenarios, let's take Badcaul School. What's the roll at the moment?

(Sandy Burr) – Five children from three families.

(David Crook) – Let's say for the sake of argument that two of those three families opted for GME in Ullapool. At what point does that school become no longer viable, and how are parents supposed to deal with the pressures of opting for GME, when that decision could lead to the closure of the local school?

(Sandy Burr) – Badcaul PS is considered a "redline" school, which means that the distances to any alternative are such it would always have to remain open, even with one child.

(David Crook) – I would still like to ask the question.

A12 (Ian Jackson) – Just to be clear, school closures are governed by the same process as we are working through tonight, so in case anyone is worried, there is no way Highland Council could decide, over the course of a school holiday or something, that we were going to close a school. The school closure process involves public consultation, a public meeting, consultation with Education Scotland and in the case of a rural school closure, referral to Scottish Ministers. I can assure everyone that the last element is far from a rubber stamping exercise. Scottish Ministers have introduced a presumption against rural school closures and the Council would have to demonstrate why closure was in the best interests of the children involved. What we have found when school rolls fall to one or two is that parents themselves are often not that keen on continuing with that arrangement. I

firmly believe that children enjoy being with other children their own age. Where there are only one or two children in a school, parents often feel their children are not getting the social interaction they need, and they often choose to move their children away in those circumstances. If that happens, there is a process called mothballing, where a school can be left open but not operational. It could re-open if the number of children increases, but clearly the longer the process goes on the more likely it is that the school will eventually close.

Q13 (Follow-up) – We have had two schools close in the Ullapool HS group in the last 15 years or so, Stoer and Assynt.

A13 (Ian Jackson) – Stoer is actually mothballed rather than closed, but the situation I described was almost exactly what happened at Stoer. The roll went down to two pupils who were actually siblings, and you can understand that in those circumstances parents feel their children need more social interaction.

Q14 (Follow-up) – I was actually thinking more of the pressure on parents who might want GME, but where doing so would leave the local school with only one or two pupils.

A14 (Ian Jackson) – It's an invidious position for any parent, but they would just have to make their own choices.

Q15 – Has there been any assessment of the economic impact of these proposals? I appreciate this is quite a narrow proposal involving small numbers, but the availability of schools has a huge impact on the local economy and whether businesses start up in an area. Would that be considered in terms of future monitoring?

A15 (Ian Jackson) – In terms of future school closures?

Q16 – No, in terms of Highland Council taking a more holistic view of the Highland economy and the role of schools in attracting businesses to the area as a whole. Whether a school is available within walking distance has a huge impact on the viability of an area, not just from the educational point of view, but from a “living in it” point of view. School bus services are all very well but they are not what people really want.

A16 (Ian Jackson) – Where Highland Council has closed schools, it has been where there are really tiny numbers. The only thing I would say, slightly counteracting what you have just said, is that a few years ago the Scottish Government set up a Commission into the Delivery of Rural Education. The Commissioners who reported on the subject looked at the issue of school closures and population patterns and could find no relationship between the two.

The Chairperson commented that this was something that was considered within the Development Plan for each area. Schools form part of each area's Development Plan, where we look at development zoning and at housing areas. Local elected councillors will also be continually looking at schools, because we are always looking at how we can develop our areas. Schools are one of our main considerations.

(Eva Faber) – I just wanted to make the point that, whilst David was highlighting earlier the pressures on parents wanting their children to travel to Ullapool for GME, Ullapool PS already has children from the Achiltibuie and Badcaul catchments attending English Medium education. I think the issues of “critical mass” are already having an impact on the smaller schools, so I don't think the creation of a GM catchment will make a significant difference.

(David Crook) – It's another pressure though.

(Eva Faber) – Football is a big draw in bringing pupils to Ullapool. David runs a very successful youth football team. Children want to come to Ullapool Primary because they get the chance to play football! Ullapool also has the swimming pool and other facilities, and some parents choose to come here, not because the school itself is offering anything more than the other schools, but because there is so much more available after school. There's also childminding, and parents who work in Ullapool. It's a big picture.

Q17 – My children were amongst the first to go through GME at Ullapool Primary when it was established in 1993. Listening to this I'm a bit depressed because the message seems to be “We're going to create this provision but in reality nobody's going to take advantage of it.” I think that's depressing for any parent who wants Gaelic Medium for their children. It took 5 years of campaigning to get Gaelic Medium established in Ullapool 25 years ago, and it took a lot of resilience to stand up against a School Board that was against GME, and a Head Teacher who, at that time, was also against it. We were a relatively organised group of parents, but now we seem to be talking about groups of 1 or 2 families. Doesn't the Council have a legal duty to provide and promote GME, as well as a moral one? It's an anomaly that people in this area don't speak Gaelic as their first language. We shouldn't be apologising for trying to keep the language alive, nor for providing our children with the opportunity to have, arguably, a more rounded education.

A17 (Coinneach Morrison) - I absolutely agree with many of your points there, and congratulations for what you achieved in the past. An integral part of the Council's Gaelic Language Plan is to have a percentage increase in the numbers attending GME. We have to bear in mind though that not everyone is looking just at GME. Some people are focused on achieving sustainable English Medium education and we have to be mindful of how we achieve a balance between the two and ensure

parents have a choice. This exercise is not about threatening English Medium provision, but it is about making sure appropriate GM provision is available.

(Brian Porter) – Just the mere fact of establishing a catchment area goes a long way to promoting accessibility. Wherever you are in Highland, or if you are thinking of moving to Highland, you can look at a map and see which school is designated for your area, or the area you are thinking of moving to. Up to now GME has never had that same status and formality. Arrangements have been based on organic growth over many years. As mentioned earlier there has been a nominal travel arrangement based on a figure of up to 15 miles, but I don't doubt that across Highland there will be different interpretations of that. Whatever the Council's decision on the configuration of it, we will end up with a GM catchment for Ullapool PS. It will mean that parents who are thinking of GME will be able to access that information easily, and that there will be parity between GM and EM provision.

Q18 (Eva Faber) – Can I just clarify that, if that catchment goes ahead, the other primary schools in the group will give out information about GM enrolment at the same time as the information about enrolling in their own schools? We hand out leaflets to all the parents explaining that GME is available. Currently though if you live in another school catchment you may not know that GME is available to you. Will that be made explicit?

A18 (Coinneach Morrison) Those leaflets should be handed out to any parents who are within reasonable travelling distance of GM provision. The information is sent out to all Head Teachers.

Q19 – (Follow-up) – Would the creation of the catchment mean that children would no longer have to make a placing request, or ask for transport?

A19 (Ian Jackson) - That's correct. I think we have said in the Proposal Paper that we would expect children travelling from the other primary catchments would use the High School bus. That is to minimise the potential financial implications for the Council.

Q20 – Would parents be able to ask the Council for pre-school education in Gaelic? This could be important to terms of continuity of education for the child, from the age of three?

A20 (Coinneach Morrison) – There's not an entitlement under the Act for pre-school children. I think our Gaelic Development Officers across the authority would be very keen to encourage pre-school provision locally if there was identified demand. We are in the fortunate position of having 3 Early Years Development Officers across the authority, and we recognise that 0-3 and 3-5 are key areas. If

there was an interest, it would certainly be a priority for the Development Officers to see what they could facilitate.

Q21 – I'm involved in a Development Company for Achiltibuie, and the school roll is one of things people look at if they are thinking of coming to the area. Although that figure is easily available, it doesn't show that there are other children in Achiltibuie that are travelling to Ullapool every day. Is there any way that the school roll figures could show the fact that the community has more children than are shown in the school roll?

A21 (Brian Porter) – We publish our school roll forecasts once a year, and we do a 15-year forecast for each school. The updated forecasts will probably appear in the next few weeks. The building blocks of the forecasts are the incumbent population; assumptions of population growth over 15 years; and the trend of historic placing requests in and out. I think we've actually published in that level of detail in the past.

(Ian Jackson) If you go onto the Highland Council website and type in "School Roll Forecasts" in the Search facility, it will bring up a page with a list of secondary schools. If you then click on the link for Ullapool it will bring up a PDF file with the projected rolls for Ullapool High and each of the primary schools.

There being no other comments, the **Chairperson** reminded those present of the closing date for responses – 10 December 2018. She encouraged those present to submit written responses, all of which were provided to the elected members who would take the final decision. Responses could be submitted via the Online Form or by letter or email. Advice on where to submit responses was on the website. A record of this meeting would be made available at least 3 weeks before the meeting of the Care, Learning and Housing Committee on 29 May 2019, where it is intended that the Council will consider the Final Report, as well as all the submissions.

MEETING CLOSED

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The Highland Council to:

- **establish a Gaelic Medium Education catchment area for Ullapool Primary School. The new catchment area will overlay the current English medium catchment areas of Ullapool Primary School, Achiltibuie Primary School, Badcaul Primary School, Lochinver Primary School and Stoer Primary School. Particular arrangements will apply for transport to Ullapool from the latter four catchment area; and**
- **formalise the current arrangements relating to Gaelic Medium Education in Ullapool High School, under which the catchment area for Ullapool High School will apply to both Gaelic and English Medium Education.**

January 2019

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of The Highland Council proposal to establish Gaelic Medium Education (GME) catchment areas for Ullapool Primary School and Ullapool High School. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all statutory obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the schools; any other users; children and young people likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people in the council area;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

1.3 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others;
- visits to Ullapool Primary School, Badcaul Primary School, Lochinver Primary School, Achiltibuie Primary School and Ullapool High School, including discussions with relevant consultees; and
- discussions as relevant to the consultation, including with Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

2. Consultation process

2.1 The Highland Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The consultation process ran from 29 October 2018 to 10 December 2018. During that time, the council held a public meeting at Ullapool Primary School. The meeting was attended by five members of the public. Announcements were placed in the local press and on the council's

online services. Statutory consultees, including parents/carers, children, staff and Bòrd na Gàidhlig were informed of the consultation. The council also confirmed that Comann nam Pàrant were advised of the proposal, although not included in the consultee list. The council published documentation for the consultation on its website. They also distributed papers to a full range of stakeholders and interested parties. The council put in place suitable arrangements to enable interested parties to respond to the proposal, whether that be electronically or in writing. Five written responses were received which raised some concerns about the proposal. These included a response from Bòrd na Gàidhlig in which they expressed concerns on aspects of the proposal to establish catchment areas for GME.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The Highland Council's proposal is responding to legislation, which includes establishing catchment areas for GME provisions. The pupil numbers opting for GME at Ullapool Primary School are increasing. A pattern is emerging which shows that almost all children at Ullapool Primary School are opting for GME rather than English Medium Education (EME). These children are almost all from the existing catchment area for EME. However, there are a few children from out with the existing catchment area for whom parents have opted for GME. Almost all consultees for the proposal emphasised the importance of safeguarding the right of parents who currently choose GME for their children, as well as the right to GME remaining an option in the future. They highlighted as a potential benefit of the proposal that parents would not have to make a placing request for GME at Ullapool Primary School, or request transport. The proposal would also give parents a guarantee of securing transport.

3.2 There are complex and sensitive issues for the council to manage within the parameters of this consultation. Their Gaelic Language Plan reinforces how they will support national priorities to support growth and sustainability of Gaelic. One of the purposes of this proposal is to make GME as widely accessible as possible. The council is promoting the principles of best value for sustaining schools in rural areas. Some of the schools affected by this consultation are in very remote rural areas and have very small pupil rolls. One of the schools in the Associated School Group (ASG), Scoraig Primary School, is not on the national road network. Almost all consultees agreed that it was not practical to include Scoraig Primary School within the proposed GME catchment area. Stoer Primary School is mothballed. Should it re-open, the council should ascertain if there is a demand for GME. In very rural areas, some consultees are concerned that the option of GME at Ullapool Primary School will adversely impact on the future of local schools. At the same time, parents and educationalists understand the impact of national shortages of teachers for GME, and challenges of recruiting and retaining staff in some rural areas. This, for them, is a reason to be supportive of the proposal to set up a GME catchment for Ullapool Primary School. However, there is a concern from a number of consultees that some of the distances to be travelled are not reasonable, particularly for young children. There are also a number of consultees who have concerns about the safety of young children travelling on buses. The council's own proposal paper refers to 'the long distances involved in travelling' it also goes on to say that the council is not 'expecting any significant impact on school rolls. Nor do we expect any impact on staff within the schools of the Ullapool ASG'. The council should continue to work with stakeholders in addressing these concerns. The council's statement on the educational benefits of this proposal should articulate more detail of the benefits of the proposal to current and future pupils. In so doing, they should take account of the concerns that have been raised.

3.3 Bòrd na Gàidhlig's response to the consultation highlighted some concerns on the proposal. Bòrd na Gàidhlig referred to GME catchment areas as overlaying a number of EME catchment areas as applying 'particularly to urban areas'. The guidance makes no distinction between urban and rural settings. Bòrd na Gàidhlig have offered to work with the council to explore solutions to the concerns that they raised. The council has advised HM Inspectors that they will continue to

work with Bòrd na Gàidhlig. They have also given written clarification that, in their final report, they will give clearer detail of how they will continue to implement the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, 2017 to set up more local GME provision, should there be demand for that in future. Through time, such measures may assist in reducing travel times. The council's final report should clarify their approach to regular promotion of GME, which would assist in addressing concerns raised on attracting parents to choose GME.

3.4 Consultees strongly supported the proposed establishment of a GME catchment area for Ullapool High School. However, they expressed concern at the lack of continuity offered by the high school with the primary stages. Parents showed strong interest in working with the headteacher and staff to increase the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence through Gaelic. A number of parents of children at EME primary stages expressed an interest in their children accessing Gaelic (Learners) as part of Language Learning in Scotland A 1+2 Approach.

3.5 A small minority of consultees highlighted that there is an area south of the Kylesku Bridge that is part of Scourie Primary School's catchment area. These pupils transfer to Ullapool High School rather than Kinlochbervie High School, to which other pupils at Scourie Primary School transfer. In its final report, the council should clarify further the arrangements for Kylesku Bridge, should parents be requesting GME which is consistently progressive.

4. Summary

Overall, the council's proposal is of educational benefit to some children and parents in that it increases accessibility to GME. At this time, the proposal makes the most appropriate use of resources, while meeting current demand for GME. The council has some reasonable concerns to address in taking the proposal forward, as detailed in section three of this report. They should give more detail on the educational benefits of this proposal, which are specific to GME in their proposed catchment area. It is important that they clarify further their strategy for promoting the availability of GME and responding to parents' requests for setting up of new GME provisions. They should define further how they will address children's safety while travelling on buses. The council needs to continue to engage with all stakeholders, including Bòrd na Gàidhlig, in addressing the concerns outlined in section three of this report.

**HM Inspectors
January 2019**

Achd nan Sgoiltean (Co-chomhairleachadh) (Alba) 2010

Aithisg le Foghlam Alba a' dèiligeadh ri taobhan foghlaim a' mholaidh le Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd gus:

- sgìre-frithealaidh Foghlam tro Mheadhan na Gàidhlig (FMG) a stèidheachadh airson Bun-sgoil Ulapuil. Bidh an sgìre-fhrithealaidh ùr a' gabhail a-steach sgìrean-frithealaidh Beurla aig an àm a tha an làthair aig Bun-sgoil Ulapuil, Bun-sgoil Achd Ille Bhuidhe, Bun-sgoil Bhada Call, Bun-sgoil Loch an Inbhir agus Bun-sgoil an Stòir. Bidh ullachaidhean sònraichte ann airson a bhith a' siubhal gu Ulapul bho na ceithir sgìrean-frithealaidh a chaidh an ainmeachadh mu dheireadh; agus
- na h-ullachaidhean fhoirmealachadh a tha ann an-dràsta a thaobh Foghlam tro Mheadhan na Gàidhlig ann an Àrd-sgoil Ulapuil, fom bi sgìre-fhrithealaidh Àrd-sgoil Ulapuil a' dèiligeadh ri Foghlam tro Mheadhan na Gàidhlig agus na Beurla.

Am Faoilleach 2019

Ro-ràdh

1.1 Tha an aithisg seo bho Foghlam Alba air a h-ullachadh le Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh airson Foghlam (Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh) a rèir cumhachan [Achd nan Sgoiltean \(Co-chomhairleachadh\) \(Alba\) 2010](#) (“Achd 2010”). Is e adhbhar na h-aithisg beachd neo-eisimeileach is neo-phàirteach a thabhann mu mholadh Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd a thaobh sgìrean-frithealaidh Foghlam tro Mheadhan na Gàidhlig (FMG) a stèidheachadh airson Bun-sgoil Ulapuil agus Àrd-sgoil Ulapuil. Tha Earrann 2 den aithisg a’ cur an cèill cunntas goirid mun phròiseas co-chomhairleachaidh. Tha Earrann 3 a’ cur an cèill beachdan Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh mu thaobhan foghlaim a’ mholaidh, a’ gabhail a-steach bheachdan cudromach a chaidh a thoirt leis an luchd-comhairleachaidh. Tha Earrann 4 a’ toirt geàrr-chunntas air beachd farsaing Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh air a’ mholadh. An uair a gheibhear an aithisg seo, tha an Achd a’ cur riathanas air a’ chomhairle beachdachadh oirre agus an uair sin an aithisg co-chomhairleachaidh dheireannach aige fhèin ullachadh. Bu chòir dhan aithisg co-chomhairleachaidh dheireannaich aig a’ chomhairle a bhith a’ gabhail a-steach lethbhreac den aithisg seo agus feumaidh mìneachadh a bhith innte, ann a bhith a’ tighinn gu co-dhùnadh mun mholadh, mun lèirmheas a tha e air a dhèanamh air a’ mholadh a chaidh a dhèanamh o thùs, a’ gabhail a-steach geàrr-chunntas de na puingean a chaidh a thogail tron phròiseas co-chomhairleachaidh agus freagairt na comhairle dhaibh. Feumaidh a’ chomhairle aithisg co-chomhairleachaidh dheireannach fhoillseachadh trì seachdainean mus tig e gu co-dhùnadh deireannach. Far a bheil comhairle a’ moladh sgoil a dhùnadh, feumaidh e na dleastanasan reachdail air fad a tha ann an Achd 2010 a choileanadh, a’ gabhail a-steach a bhith a’ toirt fios do Mhinistearan taobh a-staigh sia làithean obrach on a thig e chun a’ cho-dhùnaidh dheireannaich agus a’ mìneachadh do luchd-co-chomhairleachaidh an cothrom a tha aca riochdachaidhean a dhèanamh gu na Ministearan.

1.2 Bheachdaich Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh air:

- a’ bhuidh a dh’fhaodadh a bhith aig a’ mholadh air clann agus daoine òga bho na sgoiltean; luchd-cleachdaidh sam bith eile; clann agus daoine òga a dh’fhaodadh a bhith nan sgoilearan taobh a-staigh dà bhliadhna bho cheann-là foillseachaidh na h-aithisg molaidh; agus clann agus daoine òga eile ann an roinn na comhairle;
- buaidh sam bith eile a dh’fhaodadh a bhith aig a’ mholadh;
- mar a tha a’ chomhairle am beachd droch bhuidh sam bith a dh’fhaodadh èirigh bhon mholadh, a lùghdachadh no a sheachnadh; agus
- na buannachdan foghlaim a tha a’ chomhairle am beachd a thigeadh bho bhith a’ cur a’ mholaidh seo an cèill, agus adhbharan na comhairle airson a bhith a’ tighinn chun nam beachdan sin.

1.3 Ann a bhith ag ullachadh na h-aithisg seo, ghabh Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh os làimh na gnìomhan a leanas:

- beachdachadh air na pàipearan iomchaidh air fad a chaidh a sgaoileadh leis a’ chomhairle a thaobh a’ mholaidh, gu sònraichte an aithris air buannachdan foghlaim agus na

sgrìobhainnean co-chomhairleachaidh buntainneach, fianais sgrìobhte agus labhairteach bho phàrantan agus bho dhaoine eile;

- cuairtean gu Bun-sgoil Ulapuil, Bun-sgoil Bhada Call, Bun-sgoil Loch an Inbhir, Bun-sgoil Achd Ille Bhuidhe agus Àrd-sgoil Ulapuil, a' gabhail a-steach conaltradh ri luchd-comhairleachaidh iomchaidh, agus
- conaltraidhean a tha iomchaidh a thaobh a' cho-chomhairleachaidh, a' gabhail a-steach Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

2. Am Pròiseas Co-chomhairleachaidh

2.1 Rinn Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd co-chomhairleachadh air a mholadh (nam molaidhean) a rèir cumhachan [Achd nan Sgoiltean \(Co-chomhairleachadh\) \(Alba\) 2010](#).

2.2 Lean am pròiseas co-chomhairleachaidh bho 29 Dàmhair 2018 gu 10 Dùbhlachd 2018. Rè an ama sin chaidh coinneamh phoblach a chumail aig Bun-sgoil Ulapuil. Fhritheil còignear bhon phoball a' choinneamh. Chaidh fios a chur sna pàipearan ionadail agus air seirbheisean air-loidhne na comhairle. Chaidh fios mun cho-chomhairleachadh a thoirt do chomhairleachaidhean reachdail, a' gabhail a-steach pàrantan/luchd-cùraim, clann, luchd-obrach agus Bòrd na Gàidhlig. Dhearbh a' chomhairle gun deach innse do Chomann nam Pàrant mun mholadh, ged nach robh iad air an liosta cho-chomhairleachaidh. Dh'fhoillsich a' chomhairle na pàipearan airson a' cho-chomhairleachadh air a làrach-lìn. Sgaoil e pàipearan air làn raon de luchd-ùidh agus feadhainn aig an robh ùidh ann. Chuir a' chomhairle ann an àite ullachaidhean iomchaidh gus leigeil leis an fheadhainn aig an robh ùidh ann freagairt a thoirt don mholadh, gu h-eileagtronaigeach no ann an sgrìobhadh. Fhuair còig fiosan sgrìobhte a bha a' togail uallachaidhean mun mholadh. Bha seo a' gabhail a-steach freagairt bho Bhòrd na Gàidhlig far an robh iad a' nochdadh an uallaich a bha orra mu thaobhan den mholadh a bhith a' stèidheachadh sgìrean-frithealaidh airson FMG.

3. Taobhan Foghlaim a' Mholaidh

3.1 Tha moladh Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd a' toirt freagairt do reachdas a tha a' gabhail a-steach a bhith a' stèidheachadh sgìrean-frithealaidh airson solair FMG. Tha an àireamh de sgoilearan a tha a' roghnachadh FMG aig Bun-sgoil Ulapuil a' meudachadh. **Tha pàtran a' nochdadh a tha a' sealltainn gu bheil an ìre mhath a' chlann air fad aig Bun-sgoil Ulapuil a' roghnachadh FMG seach Foghlam tro Mheadhan na Beurla (EME).** Tha a' chlann sin an ìre mhath uile bhon sgìre-frithealaidh airson EME. Ach, tha beagan den chloinn bho thaobh a-muigh na sgìre-frithealaidh agus am pàrantan air FMG a roghnachadh. Bha an ìre mhath a h-uile neach ris an deach comhairle a chur ag ràdh gun robh e cudromach gun deigheadh dìon a chur air còraichean phàrantan a tha a' roghnachadh FMG aig an àm a tha an làthair, cho math ris a' chòir gum biodh FMG mar roghainn san àm ri teachd. Chuir iad cudrom air a' bhuannachd a dh'fhaodadh a bhith an cois a' mholaidh nach biodh aig pàrantan ri iarrtas suidheachaidh a dhèanamh airson FMG aig Bun-sgoil Ulapuil, no iarrtas airson còmhdhail fhaighinn.

3.2 Tha cùisean iom-fhillte agus frionasach aig a' chomhairle ri rianachd taobh a-staigh crìochan a' chonaltraidh seo. Tha am Plana Gàidhlig a' daingneachadh mar a bheir iad taic do phrìomhachasan nàiseanta gus taic a chur ri fàs agus seasmhachd na Gàidhlig. Is e aon de dh'adhbharan a' mholaidh seo FMG a dhèanamh cho so-ruigsinneach 's a ghabhas. Tha a' chomhairle ag adhartachadh nam prionnsapalan de luach as fheàrr airson a bhith a' cumail sgoiltean a' dol ann an ceàrnaidhean air an tuath. Tha cuid de na sgoiltean a tha a' tighinn fo bhuaidh na co-chomhairleachaidh seo ann an ceàrnaidhean gu mòr a-muigh air an tuath agus anns a bheil àireamhan gu math beag de chlann. Tha aon de na sgoiltean a tha sa Bhuidheann Sgoile Co-cheangailte (ASG), Bun-sgoil Sgoraig, nach eil air an lìonra rathaidean nàiseanta. Cha mhòr

nach do dh'aontaich an luchd-co-chomhairleachaidh air fad nach biodh e practaigeach Bun-sgoil Sgoraig a ghabhail a-steach san sgìre-fhrithéalaidh a bhathar a' moladh airson FMG. Tha Bun-sgoil an Stòir air a bhith dùinte car ùine. Nan deigheadh a fosgladh, bu chòir dhan chomhairle faighinn a-mach am biodh iarrtas ann airson FMG. Ann an àiteachan a tha gu mòr a-muigh air an tuath, tha cuid de na co-chomhairleachaidhean le iomnaidh gun toir roghainn FMG aig Bun-sgoil Ulapuill droch bhuaidh air leantainneachd nan sgoiltean ionadail san àm ri teachd. Aig an aon àm, tha pàrantan agus luchd-foghlaim a' tuigsinn na buaidh a tha aig gainnead thidsearan gu nàiseanta air FMG, agus na dùbhlain a tha ann a bhith a' fastadh agus a' cumail thidsearan ann an cuid de cheàrnaidhean air an tuath. Tha seo, dhaibhsan, na adhbhar airson taic a thoirt don mholadh sgìre-fhrithéalaidh FMG a shuidheachadh airson Bun-sgoil Ulapuill. Ach, tha uallach air cuid de na co-chomhairleachaidhean nach eil cuid de na h-astaran a dh'fheumar siubhal reusanta, gu sònraichte do chlann òg. Tha cuideachd grunnan cho-chomhairleachaidhean air a bheil uallaichean mu shàbhailteachd chloinne òig a bhios a' siubhal air busaichean. Tha pàpear molaidh na comhairle fhèin a' togail air "na h-astaran fada a dh'fheumar siubhal" agus a' leantainn air adhart ag ràdh nach eil a' chomhairle a' sùileachadh 'buaidh mhòr sam bith air na h-àireamhan sna sgoiltean. Cha mhotha a tha sinn a' sùileachadh buaidh sam bith air luchd-obrach sna sgoiltean ann an ASG Ulapuill'. Bu chòir dhan chomhairle leantainn air adhart ag obair le luchd-ùidh ann a bhith a' dèiligeadh ris na h-uallachaidhean sin. Bu chòir do dh'aithris na comhairle mu bhuanachdan foghlaim a' mholaidh seo barrachd mìneachaidh a dhèanamh air buannachdan a' mholaidh do sgoilearan an là an-diugh agus an là a-màireach. Ann a bhith a' dèanamh seo, bu chòir dhaibh cunntas a thoirt air na h-uallachaidhean a chaidh a thogail.

3.3 Thog freagairt Bhòrd na Gàidhlig don cho-chomhairleachadh cuid de dh'uallachaidhean mun mholadh. Thug Bòrd na Gàidhlig iomradh air sgìrean-frithealaidh FMG mar a bhith a' gabhail a-steach grunnan sgìrean-frithealaidh EME agus gur ann 'gu sònraichte airson sgìrean bailteil' a tha seo. Chan eil an stiùireadh a' dèanamh eadar-dhealachadh eadar suidheachaidhean air an tuath no ann am bailtean mòra. Tha Bòrd na Gàidhlig air tabhann gun obraich iad còmhla ris a' chomhairle gus fuasglaidhean a sgrùdadh a thaobh nan uallachaidhean a tha iad air a thogail. Tha a' chomhairle air innse do Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh gun lean iad orra ag obair le Bòrd na Gàidhlig. Tha iad cuideachd air soilleireachadh ann an sgrìobhadh, gun toir iad cunntas nas mionaidiche san aithisg dheireannaich aca, gun toir iad cunntas nas mionaidiche mun dòigh anns an lean iad orra a' cur an sàs an Stiùiridh Reachdail airson Foghlam Gàidhlig, 2017 gus barrachd solar FMG a shuidheachadh, nam biodh iarrtas ann airson sin san àm ri teachd. Tro thìde, dh'fhaodadh gun lùghdaicheadh a leithid sin de cheumannan an ùine siubhail. Bu chòir do dh'aithisg dheireannach na comhairle am modh-obrach a thaobh adhartachadh cunbhalach air FMG a shoilleireachadh, agus bheireadh sin taic ann an dèiligeadh ri uallachaidhean a chaidh a thogail a thaobh tàladh phàrantan gu bhith a' taghadh FMG.

3.4 Bha na co-chomhairleachaidhean a' toirt taic làidir don mholadh sgìre-fhrithéalaidh FMG a stèidheachadh airson Àrd-sgoil Ulapuill. Ach, bha uallach orra mun dìth leantainneachd a bha an àrd-sgoil a' tabhann do na h-ìrean bun-sgoile. Nochd na pàrantan ùidh làidir ann a bhith ag obair leis a' cheannard agus an luchd-obrach gus libhrigeadh a' Churraicealam airson Sàr-mhathais tron Ghàidhlig, a mheudachadh. Nochd grunnan phàrantan chloinne aig ìrean bun-sgoile EMG ùidh sa chlann aca a bhith a' faighinn cothrom air Gàidhlig (Luchd-ionnsachaidh) mar phàirt de Modh-obrach 1+2 Ionnsachadh Cànan ann an Alba.

3.5 Shoilleirich beagan cho-chomhairleachaidhean gu bheil sgìre deas air Drochaid a' Chaolais Chumhaing a tha mar phàirt de sgìre-fhrithéalaidh Bun-sgoil Sgobharaidh. Bidh na sgoilearan sin a' dol air adhart gu Àrd-sgoil Ulapuill seach gu Àrd-sgoil Cheann Loch Biorbhaidh, far am bi sgoilearan eile aig Bun-sgoil Sgobharaidh a' dol. Na aithisg dheireannach, bu chòir dhan chomhairle soilleireachadh nas motha a dhèanamh air na h-ullachaidhean airson Drochaid a' Chaolais Chumhaing, nam biodh pàrantan ag iarraidh FMG a tha gu cunbhalach adhartach.

4. Geàrr-iomradh

San fharsaingeachd, tha buannachd foghlaim ann am moladh na comhairle do chuid de chlann agus pàrantan leis gu bheil e a' meudachadh cothrom air FMG. Aig an àm seo, tha am moladh a' dèanamh an fheum as fheàrr de stòrasan, agus a' coinneachadh an iarrtais a tha ann aig an àm a tha an làthair airson FMG. Tha iomagain reusanta aig a' chomhairle mu chuid de nithean ann a bhith a' toirt a' mholaidh air adhart, mar a tha air a mhìneachadh ann an earrann a trì den aithisg seo. Bu chòir dhaibh barrachd fiosrachaidh a thoirt seachad mu bhuanachdan foghlaim a' mholaidh seo, a tha a-mhàin co-cheangailte ri FMG san sgìre-fhrithialaidh a tha iad a' moladh. Tha e cudromach gun soilleirich iad nas motha an ro-innleachd airson adhartachadh cothruim air FMG agus a bhith a' dèiligeadh ri iarrtasan phàrantan airson a bhith suidheachadh solar FMG ùr. Bu chòir dhaibh tuilleadh mìneachaidh a dhèanamh air an dòigh san dèilig iad ri sàbhailteachd chloinne an uair a bhios iad a' siubhal air busaichean. Feumaidh a' chomhairle leantainn air adhart a' conaltradh ris an luchd-ùidh air fad, a' gabhail a-steach Bòrd na Gàidhlig, ann an dèiligeadh ris na h-uallachaidhean a tha air am mìneachadh ann an earrann a trì den aithisg seo.

Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh Am Faoilleach 2019