

Agenda Item	8.
Report No	EDU/05/21

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Education

Date: 11 February 2021

Report Title: Review of the statutory consultation exercise to establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Gairloch Primary School

Report By: Executive Chief Officer, 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 formally establish a Gaelic Medium (GM) catchment area for Gairloch 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). Gairloch Primary School is the only primary school within the Gairloch Associated School Group (ASG) to offer GME. It is proposed to formally create a GM catchment that overlays the current English Medium catchments of Gairloch Primary School, Poolewe Primary School, Bualnaluib Primary School and Kinlochewe Primary School. The proposed catchment area is smaller than that originally proposed in consultation, and takes account of comments received. The revised GM catchment is in line with that recommended by Education Scotland.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i. consider the proposal set out within the Consultation Report (Appendix 1) and associated appendices;
 - ii. consider the representations received and the report from Education Scotland (Appendices 3i-3iv); and
 - iii. agree to recommend to the Highland Council the creation of a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Gairloch Primary School on the basis set out at Paragraph 1.2 above.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource – It is intended to use the existing transport to Gairloch High School to meet any additional transport requirements arising from the new GM catchment. No additional costs are expected to arise.
- 3.2 Legal - The statutory consultation has been taken forward as per the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – None
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – None
- 3.5 Risk – None
- 3.6 Gaelic – The Proposal will provide clarity to local parents, in respect of entitlement to GME.

4. Overview

- 4.1 **Appendix 1** is the proposal for decision. The original proposal issued for consultation, and relevant documents 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.
- 4.2 The proposal was widely circulated to parents, pupils and others. A total of four written responses were received, two from local community councils, one from Bòrd na Ghàidhlig and one from Comann nam Pàrant. All of these responses expressed concern about the size of the catchment originally proposed, as did the Report from Education Scotland. The Council has responded by reducing the size of the proposed catchment area. Any other concerns are addressed in the "Responses" section of Appendix 1 (see pages 4-7). Eight members of the public attended the public meeting, the note of which is at Appendix 2.
- 4.3 In their response to consultation, Bòrd na Ghàidhlig also expressed concern over whether the size of the catchment area would preclude any future provision of GME in Poolewe, Bualnaluib and Kinlochewe primary schools. In its Proposal Paper, the Council made an express commitment that any identified parental demand for local provision of GME from within any of those schools, would be assessed in accordance with the terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 (see page 1 of Appendix A). In subsequent discussions with Bòrd na Ghàidhlig, the Council re-stated that commitment and Bòrd na Ghàidhlig has confirmed it is reassured that this has addressed its concerns (see Response 9 of Appendix 1).
- 4.4 One response, from Torridon and Kinlochewe CC, suggested that children in Shieldaig should be given a choice of attending GME in either Gairloch Primary or Lochcarron Primary, which is part of the Plockton High ASG. The review report has not adopted this suggestion, as it is not consistent with Council policy.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 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 23 November 2020. No further representations were received.

- 5.2 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.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer – Education and Learning

Date: 12 January 2021

Author: Ian Jackson, Education Officer

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HIGHLAND COUNCIL

EDUCATION AND LEARNING SERVICE

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

This report has been prepared following a review of the proposal to establish a Gaelic Medium (GM) catchment area for Gairloch 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 Gairloch High School on 22 January 2020.
- The report from Education Scotland.

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

Following consideration of the responses received during consultation, the Council is proposing changes to the original Proposal. The detailed changes are set out at Responses 2 and 6, and Section 13, below.

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Appendix 4 - Report from Education Scotland (English language version)

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Appendix A - The proposal document

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1.0 Background

- 1.1 Highland Council's Care, Learning and Housing Committee, at its meeting on 5 December 2019, agreed that a statutory consultation be undertaken on the proposal to establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Gairloch Primary School.
- 1.2 The Proposal Paper suggested that the new catchment will overlay the current English Medium (EM) catchments of Gairloch Primary School, Poolewe Primary School, Bualnaluib Primary School, Kinlochewe Primary School, Shieldaig Primary School, and Torridon Primary School. Particular arrangements would apply to school transport from the areas outwith the Gairloch PS catchment.
- 1.3 The Proposal Paper also suggested formalising the current arrangements relating to Gàidhlig Medium Education (GME) in Gairloch High School, under which the catchment area for Gairloch High School would apply to both Gàidhlig Medium and English Medium education.
- 1.4 **Appendix A** is the original consultative paper and provides full details of the above proposal. **Appendix B** is the appendix to the original proposal.

2.0 Consultation process

- 2.1 The formal consultation period ran from Monday 9 December 2019 to Friday 31 January 2020. 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 Gairloch Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
 - (ii) Parents of pupils attending Poolewe Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
 - (iii) Parents of pupils attending Bualnaluib Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
 - (iv) Parents of pupils attending Kinlochewe Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
 - (v) Parents of pupils attending Shieldaig 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;
- 2.3 The proposal document was advertised on the Highland Council website.
- 2.4 A public meeting was held at Gairloch High School on 22 January 2020. The meeting was advertised in advance on the Highland Council website and Facebook page and in the *Ross-shire Journal*. The note of the meeting is at **Appendix 2**.
- 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. The timescale for the process was affected by the national measures taken to limit the COVID pandemic.
- 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**. There were 4 written responses received during the consultation period. Copies of these responses can also be found at **Appendices 3i-3iv**. All the responses were submitted on behalf of organisations (Comann nam Pàrant, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and two local community councils).

4.0 Issues raised during public consultation

- 4.1 The issues raised in writing during the consultation exercise are summarised below, together with the responses from the Council. Some of the responses have made the same or very similar arguments, and where this occurs the arguments have been grouped together and addressed only once.

Issue 1

The lack of provision of Gaelic as a second language in feeder primary schools was referred to at the public meeting on 22nd January. It is important that all pupils have the opportunity to study Gaelic as learners and encouraged to continue their learning at secondary.

That all the resources for GM are spent in Gairloch results in zero provision for Gaelic input for Bualnaluib Primary.

Very little consultation took place when the Gaelic medium started in Gairloch, it would have been much fairer for all to have mobile GM teachers visiting each of the primary schools regularly, leading to many more children growing up with Gaelic, creating a sense of shared culture rather than the division and inequity currently seen, with disparity only worsening as austerity measures seem to cut mainstream education harder.

It is with some hope that we learn resources are being allocated to training teachers and delivering L2 Gaelic, and I also appreciate this is in line with National policy but would like our views considered as part of the wider debate.

Response 1

The Council is working towards a situation where all the primary school children in the ASG would be able to do Learners' Gaelic, and then when they come into the High School there is a pathway there that will enable them to continue with learners' Gaelic, that they could continue up to certificate level.

There is a comprehensive programme underway in Highland to train staff in delivering Gaelic as a second language. There is ongoing training for staff to and a lot of work has gone into preparing materials. A lot of the material is online, so parents can access it as well.

Issue 2

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 from Shieldaig and Torridon and times are not 'reasonable' for primary-age children. However, the Bòrd would not wish any pupils who currently travel to Bun-sgoil Gheàrrloch to be

disadvantaged and so recommend that the opportunity to enter GME is retained until alternative provision is available locally.

Response 2

Having considered this and other responses with similar comments, Highland Council will remove the Shieldaig and Torridon catchments from the proposed GM catchment for Gairloch Primary. In practical terms this is unlikely to affect any children, as at present no children from these catchments attend GME in Gairloch.

Issue 3

Bòrd na Gàidhlig are concerned that this proposal which, as claimed, 'helps to consolidate existing provision of GME' will deter parents from making a request for GME provision in their own school at a future date. We are also concerned that any such request would be less likely to have a positive outcome.

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.

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

Response 3

Highland Council is clear that the proposed GM catchment area for Gairloch 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. This provision was specifically highlighted on page 1 of the Proposal Paper (Appendix A)

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 4

Given the distance to travel to Gairloch, [from Shieldaig, Torridon and Kinlochewe] it seems appropriate that families living on our side maintain the choice of attending either Gairloch or Lochcarron GM which is considerably closer, especially for children living in Shieldaig or round the Applecross Coast.

For young children living in outlying areas such as Diabaig or Arrina it would be a very early start to meet the morning bus which leaves after 7am and they would not return home till well after 5 pm.

There is a significant difference between infants travelling in a private car and on a larger bus for longer journeys without an escort where issues such as toilets or travel sickness could arise so there would need to be someone identified to be able to help if needed.

Senior pupils can find the daily journey tiring so this could also have a potential impact on young ones.

Anyone in Achnasheen would also be closer to Lochcarron.

Response 4

Although it is suggested that parents “maintain the choice” of attending GME at either Gairloch or Lochcarron, such a choice does not exist at present.

Highland Council’s enrolment scheme is based on the principle of a designated school for each address in Highland. The designated school for a particular address could be different depending on whether a pupil is accessing GME or not, but we would not propose to place a single address in more than GM catchment area.

It is true that Shieldaig itself is closer to Plockton than it is to Gairloch. However, pupils from Shieldaig transfer to Gairloch for secondary education, and any changes to that arrangement would itself require statutory consultation.

Issue 5

It may be easier for families living in Kinlochewe to travel to Gairloch on the bus though this could also impact on the already fragile number of pupils in our small schools.

Maintaining the status quo not only deprives the pupils of equity of educational provision, but additionally leaves the school short of pupils who are bused to Gairloch for Gaelic medium. This can in certain circumstances have severe consequences by reducing the hours of teaching provision locally at huge detriment to the wellbeing and education of staff and pupils. It

only requires a minimal dip in numbers to lose half a teacher, thus one family choosing Gaelic education for their children can have an impact on the whole of Bualnaluib primary with a knock-on effect for the community.

Response 5

The Council recognises the concerns within communities such as Bualnaluib, Poolewe and Kinlochewe 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 Gairloch 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.”

- 4.2 The note of the public meeting is at Appendix 2. Seventeen questions were raised and were answered during the meeting. Most covered issues that were also raised in the written responses and are addressed above. The Council did give a commitment to clarify the transport proposals set out in the Proposal Paper. This is addressed at Section 8 below.

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. An English language copy of the report from Education Scotland is at **Appendix 4**. A Gaelic language copy is at **Appendix 5**.
- 5.2 In their report, Education Scotland noted that the proposal demonstrates The Highland Council’s continued commitment to implementing the statutory Guidance for Gaelic Education. It assists the Council in clarifying transport arrangements for children attending Gaelic Medium Education and in pursuing its duty to provide best value. Almost all consultees supported the council in establishing a catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education. However, Education Scotland also identified a few issues and concerns arising from the consultation that merit further consideration.
- 5.3 Some of the schools affected by this consultation are in very remote rural areas. The schools have very small pupil rolls, and it was noted that some consultees are concerned that the option of Gaelic Medium Education at Gairloch Primary

School will adversely impact on the future of local schools. These consultees argued that one solution would be for all children to learn Gaelic as an additional language as part of the curriculum. This, they think, would keep children attending their local schools. HM Inspectors agree with the council, that should parents who reside within the proposed catchment area request access to Gaelic Medium Education at Gairloch Primary School, that that should be made available. They advised that, should the proposal be adopted, the council needs to be clearer that Gaelic Learner and Medium Education are both valuable learning pathways. However, the Council should take account of evidence that immersion brings children to fluency more quickly.

- 5.4 Education Scotland noted that a number of consultees expressed concern about some of the proposed distances that children were expected to travel to access Gaelic Medium Education. They recommend the council keep demand for Gaelic Medium Education in the area under review, and engage with parents and others in ascertaining whether further Gaelic Medium Education provision could be put into place. Several responses highlighted that children residing in the catchment area of Shieldaig Primary School are considerably closer to Lochcarron Primary School than Gairloch Primary School. Gaelic Medium Education is available at Lochcarron Primary School, but it does not fall within the associated school group of Gairloch High School. The distance between Shieldaig Primary School and Lochcarron Primary School falls within the council's reasonable distance to travel. The council should do some further work to ascertain the impact that this may have on educational benefits for children. Their further investigation should include a focus on the impact for children in accessing early learning and childcare and secondary education through the medium of Gaelic. The council's final report should be clear on the resulting educational benefits of their final decision. Once a decision has been made on this, the council may need to revisit section 6.11 of their proposal paper which highlights that the Gairloch High School catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education is the same area that currently exists.
- 5.5 Education Scotland conclude that the catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education at Gairloch Primary School should overlay that of Bualnaluib, Gairloch, Kinlochewe and Poolewe Primary Schools. The council should define further how they will address children's safety while travelling on buses. They further conclude it is a reasonable request that the council investigate whether children who reside in the catchment area of Shieldaig Primary School should have the option of accessing Gaelic Medium Education at Lochcarron Primary School. It is HM Inspectors' view that the shorter travelling distances may be beneficial in accessing Gaelic Medium Education at the primary stages. It is important that the council's final decision takes account of the statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education to 'attract parents to choose Gaelic Medium Education for their children'. 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.
- 5.6 The issues raised by Education Scotland are addressed in Section 6 below.

6.0 Responses to the Issues raised by Education Scotland

Issue 6

The catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education at Gairloch Primary School should overlay that of Bualnaluib, Gairloch, Kinlochewe and Poolewe Primary Schools.

Response 6

Having considered the various responses to the consultation exercise, the Council accepts the above suggestion.

Issue 7

The council should define further how they will address children's safety while travelling on buses.

Response 7

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 8

The council should investigate whether children who reside in the catchment area of Shieldaig Primary School should have the option of accessing Gaelic Medium Education at Lochcarron Primary School. It is HM Inspectors' view that the shorter travelling distances may be beneficial in accessing Gaelic Medium Education at the primary stages.

The council should do some further work to ascertain the impact that this may have on educational benefits for children. Their further investigation should include a focus on the impact for children in accessing early learning and

childcare and secondary education through the medium of Gaelic. The council's final report should be clear on the resulting educational benefits of their final decision.

Response 8

See Response 4 above. The Shieldaig PS catchment is part of the Gairloch Associated School Group (ASG), whilst the Lochcarron PS catchment is part of the Plockton ASG. If children from Shieldaig were to attend Lochcarron for GME, this would imply a transfer to Plockton High School rather than Gairloch High School. Highland Council does not think this would assist with community cohesion within Shieldaig.

Were there to be future demand for GME within the community of Shieldaig, then on balance Highland Council believes this would best be met locally.

Issue 9

The Council needs to continue to engage with all stakeholders, including Bòrd na Gàidhlig, in addressing the concerns outlined in the Education Scotland Report.

Response 9

The Council has continued to engage with Bòrd na Gàidhlig, at official level, to address the issues raised by Education Scotland. The Bòrd have been informally advised of the changes to the Proposal following the outcome of the consultation exercise. They are reassured by the Council's awareness of Paragraphs 1.22 and 1.23 of the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, as well as its willingness to assess any future requests for GMPE from within the Gairloch ASG in accordance with the 2016 Act and the Statutory Guidance.

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 Since the GM provision at Gairloch Primary is co-located with Gairloch High School, travel arrangements are already in place for journeys to the designated GM provision. The proposal will clarify entitlement to this travel.

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 no alleged omissions or inaccuracies.

11.0 Overall Review of Consultation Exercise

11.1 The majority of the responses received expressed concern about the size of the proposed GM catchment area. The Council has responded to the above by reducing the size of the proposed catchment, as set out at Responses 2 and 6 above, and in the conclusion 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.

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 sections 4 and 6 above.

13.2 The Education Scotland Inspector visited Gairloch Primary School 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 On reviewing all of the submissions, the note of the meeting, and the Education Scotland report; officials conclude that the Proposal to create a GM catchment area for Gairloch Primary School offers educational benefits and should be implemented, but with a reduced catchment area from that set out in the Proposal Paper. The revised GM catchment area for Gairloch PS should overlay the current EM catchments for Gairloch PS, Poolewe PS, Bualnaluib PS, and Kinlochewe PS. Particular arrangements for school transport will apply to any pupils attending GME from outwith the Gairloch PS catchment itself.

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.

Brian Porter
Head of Resources, Education and Learning Service
16 November 2020

MINUTE OF PUBLIC MEETING HELD AT GAIRLOCH HIGH SCHOOL
22 JANUARY 2020

CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO CREATE A GAELIC MEDIUM CATCHMENT AREA FOR GAIRLOCH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Panel

Biz Campbell, Councillor (Chair)
Norma Young, Area Care and Learning Manager (West)
Don Esson, Area Quality Improvement Manager (West)
Ian Jackson, Education Officer, Highland Council

8 members of the public attended.

The Chairperson began by welcoming everyone to the meeting, and by introducing herself and the officials present. The meeting had originally been called to discuss the proposed creation of a Gàidhlig Medium (GM) catchment area for Gairloch Primary School. Copies of the Proposal Paper and appendices were distributed. The Proposal Paper had been issued as a result of statutory guidance issued by Bòrd na Gàidhlig (BnaG).

Q1 – Is this something that is being done Highland-wide?

A1 (Norma Young) - Yes, and we will speak about that a bit later.

The Chairperson then asked Ian Jackson to describe the consultation process.

Ian Jackson advised that, as indicated by the Chairperson, the Council is required to introduce GM catchment areas under the terms of Statutory Guidance issued by BnaG. The setting up of a catchment area involves a statutory consultation, of which this meeting was part. We were in the initial phase of that consultation, which was due to end on 31 January 2020. The purpose of tonight's meeting is to gather views, and we would try to answer any questions that are raised.

The formal process has a number of stages and gives ample opportunity for views to be expressed to the Council before any final decision is made. Once the public consultation ends on 31 January, Education Scotland becomes involved. They will look at the Proposal Paper, the note of the meeting tonight, and any written representations, and will form a view on the educational benefits of the proposal. Education Scotland will visit Gairloch Primary, and they will be keen to meet with any parents who wish to make their views known. The Council has to take account of Education Scotland's view on the educational benefits and respond to any points raised by their report, as well as any representations received as a result of the

consultation process. Following the completion of that stage, the Council will take a Final Report to the Education Committee of the Council. As part of the inclusive process, the Final Report will be published at least 3 weeks before it is submitted to Committee, and anyone who responded in writing to the initial consultation will be invited to make “further representations” during those 3 weeks. Any further representations that are made are submitted to the members of the Committee, either in advance or tabled on the day, so that members are fully informed of any issues that may have arisen. Members will also see copies of the original responses and the note of this meeting. After considering the outcome of consultation, members will then create a catchment, either as set out in this proposal, or in an amended form.

The Chairperson then asked Norma Young to explain the educational aspects of the proposal.

Norma Young referred to the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Medium Education, mentioned earlier. When the Guidance was produced it suited Highland Council quite well, as we were looking at the provision of transport to GME even before the Guidance was issued. The current consultation was part of a rolling programme of creating GM catchments for all schools in Highland that offered GME. We had already covered areas such as Mallaig, Lochaber and Ullapool

The Proposal Paper sets out how Highland Council is seeking to make GME as accessible for as many parents as possible in the Gairloch area. In the context of tonight’s discussion, the references to the proposed GM catchment were references to the Gairloch ASG – the combined catchment areas of all the individual primary schools. We would like all the children within the ASG to be able to come to GME, if their parents want that. This approach is similar to that we have advanced in other catchments. The process has to take place over an extended period due to resourcing issues, not just in Highland but also in Education Scotland. We have existing transport that comes into our secondary schools, which can be used by those looking to access GME in the primary school.

One of the key features is providing clarity on entitlement to transport to GME. The educational benefits around the Proposal are set out in paragraphs 7.1 and 7.2, and we consider that the Proposal will help consolidate the existing GME provision. The clarification around transport will assist the Head Teacher in advising parents who are considering enrolling in GME.

Mrs Young asked Maggie Wentworth, from Comann nam Pàrant, whether she wished to add anything.

Ms Wentworth replied that it was up to individual parents to ask specific questions. CnamP would of course put in their own submission. There had always been a history of Gairloch PS being open to children from the other catchments who wanted GME. Given the small numbers attending Kinlochewe and Shieldaig schools, it was probably

unrealistic to offer GME in these schools unless all the P1s in a given year expressed a wish to access GME – that situation did arise in Bunessan (Argyll and Bute).

The other possibility for parents, who did not want to send their children long distances to GME, is via the 1 + 2 languages provision in the local primary school, and thereafter at Garioch High School, which has very good Gaelic provision.

Norma Young said that led nicely into the Council's aim of expanding Gaelic Medium provision at Gairloch High School. Currently the provision of Gàidhlig as a language is very good, but it would be good to offer other subjects through the medium of Gàidhlig. We are hoping to create a better pathway towards offering certificated subjects through the language.

The Chairperson then opened the meeting to the Q and A session.

Q2 – I'm the Secretary of the Bualnaluib PS Parent Council and also the Aultbea Community Council. I just wondered whether the Council had given any consideration to the potential negative impact. A school like Bualnaluib really feels the loss of a single family, which can tip the roll so that the school loses a 0.5 FTE teaching post. I feel it would be better if everybody got some Gaelic rather than a few people getting it all. Bualnaluib currently has zero provision for Gaelic and I think the Council should consider employing roving teachers who could provide a day a week of Gaelic.

A2 (Norma Young) – There are two things there. I know what you mean by the potential loss of a family from the school, but Highland Council is very clear that if parents wish to enrol their child in GME and they live within reasonable distance of provision, we have an obligation to assist with that. Your second point is important. There is money available to train teachers up for the 1 + 2 language programme, and the next step is making sure every school is included. The Gairloch area is a good case in point since there is provision for Gaelic learners at the High School, so there is a clear pathway available for progression.

I hear what you say about having someone going into a school one day a week to deliver Gaelic, but it is acknowledged that educationally it is better to have full immersion in Gaelic, with the same class teacher every day

Q3 (follow-up) – But that is putting all of the resource into a very small number of pupils.

A3 (Norma Young) – We are working towards a situation where all the youngsters in Bualnaluib would be able to do Gaelic, and then when they come into the High School there is a pathway there that will enable them to continue with learners' Gaelic, that they could continue up to certificate level.

(Ian Jackson) – We had similar comments during the consultation for the Ullapool ASG, where small schools like Achiltibuie were concerned about the possible impact on their roll, so we do recognise the issue.

Q4 (follow-up) – It causes a huge split in the community.

A4 (Norma Young) – It is the case though, that any parent can make a request for their child to attend a school other than their catchment school. That applies to any parent, not just those that are seeking GME

Q5 – Is there a timescale on the introduction of L2 in the local primary schools?

A5 (Norma Young) – We are working on that at present, and staff are doing the training. Later this evening we'll be looking at the management of schools, which should settle the staffing overall. Where there is Gaelic in the secondary school it's really important that all the local primary schools can offer L2. It makes sense, because it is another SQA qualification that young people might be able to obtain relatively easily, because they will have been studying it for a long time.

(Don Esson) – There is a comprehensive programme underway in Highland to train staff in delivering L2, because what tends to happen with the turnover of staff, is that a member of staff who has been trained moves on, and then there can be gap. There's ongoing training for staff to ensure that we've got that coverage all the time. There's a lot of work gone into preparing materials, and a lot of material is online, so parents can access them as well.

(Norma Young) – If parents are interested in having Gaelic, but they don't want to leave their own communities to come to Gaelic Medium they can still access it that way.

Q6 – Can I ask a question about the transport at paragraphs 6.7 and 6.8? Is paragraph 6.7 implying that although the catchment area is going to be open to all 6 primary schools, parents in Kinlochewe, Torridon and Shieldaig will have to arrange their own transport?

A6 (Norma Young) – No. They would be allowed to go on the bus, but we recognise it is a long distance.

Q7 (follow-up) – It's just that the text talks about an unacceptable cost to the taxpayer.

A7 (Ian Jackson) – That would be for dedicated transport. Children could travel on the High School bus. Some parents, and I mean generally and not particularly in this area, are unhappy with the suggestion that a P1 pupil should travel on the High School bus. We understand the reasons for that of course, but what we were trying to convey is that we may not accept an enrolment in GM on the basis of a pupil travelling in a taxi from Shieldaig to Gairloch. We are though here tonight to listen to the points that are being made, so if there is a lack of clarity there then we will take that away and look at it.

Q8 – What about the fact that at the moment it's a very small minibus. What happens if because of GM enrolments you require a bigger bus at additional cost?

A8 (Norma Young) – If there was an influx of pupils into GME then we might need to look at a bigger bus. Our Transport Unit would look at how best that might be done. What the Paper is saying is that there is transport available and parents can use it. Some of the worries that parents have had in other areas have not materialised. Often the pupils travelling on the High School bus are neighbours or even siblings of the primary school pupils. They are not the monsters that some parents fear!

(Ian Jackson) – I think the number of children who will enrol in GME from Shieldaig or Kinlochewe will be small, if any. There are only 4 children in Kinlochewe in total, and 9 in Shieldaig, albeit that latter number will go up a bit in years to come. It takes a lot of commitment to Gaelic to send a small child those kinds of distances, and given the very small numbers we have even for EM, I can't see there being many add-ons to the bus, if any. At present, I believe the only pupils attending GME at Gairloch who are not from the Gairloch catchment are from Poolewe, which is obviously the school most accessible to Gairloch.

(Norma Young) – This proposal is about clarity. Up to now parents have never been sure whether they would be granted to transport to GME. Defining the catchment will resolve that.

Q9 – I definitely think the section in the paper on transport arrangements needs to be clarified.

A9 (Ian Jackson) – OK, thanks for the comment, we'll have a look at that.

Q10 – My next question is about the numbers in GME now, and the teaching ratios. What happens if a family move into say, Kinlochewe, and decide they want GME, and suddenly we need an extra 0.5 teacher?

A10 – (Norma Young) – You can only enrol into GME in P1, due to the immersion issue. The only exceptions are where you have come from another GME setting or you are a native speaker.

Q11 (follow-up) – OK, but what would happen if new enrolments pushed the number up so that we required extra staff. Would they be told no?

A11 (Norma Young) – We can't refuse GME because we can't find staff. As you know you currently have 1.5 FTE teachers in the GM classes at Gairloch PS. The extra 0.5 FTE was left because in a rural area like this it is very difficult to find a teacher willing to work 0.5 FTE. That would also be my plan going forward. If we ever needed to recruit a 0.5FTE Gaelic teacher we would advertise for 1FTE and allocate them to other things as well as Gàidhlig, because the likelihood of attracting a 0.5FTE teacher to an area like Gairloch is effectively zero. We would need to create a package around a post, with funding from different sources. If the roll then went up they could become full-time in Gàidhlig.

Q12 – I am the Secretary of Torridon and Kinlochewe CC and the former HT of Torridon PS. A decade or two ago all of the local Head Teachers were from a Gaelic speaking background or were trained in Gaelic as a second language, whereas now they aren't. That change has hampered the delivery of Gaelic in the smaller schools. The distances involved in travelling from the Torridon catchment to Gairloch are ridiculous. If you were in Diabaig you would have to leave at 7.00am to get to Torridon to meet the High School bus. Parental transport would be far more conducive than sending a P1 child unaccompanied on the bus. As a Community Council, we feel that the Shieldaig PS catchment takes in the Applecross coast as far as Rubha, and the area has close links with Lochcarron. We feel it is important that people in the Shieldaig area should have the choice of going to Lochcarron, as people do in Achnasheen, where you have a choice of going to Dingwall or Gairloch. The children from Torridon and Shieldaig go to Lochcarron for after school activities such as shinty, Highland dancing, badminton, music lessons etc, so there are strong ties. Shieldaig and Torridon used to be officially part of the Plockton HS catchment, and secondary school children stayed in the hostel in Plockton, before they built the new school here. We think it is important that people are still offered that choice.

A12 (Norma Young) – There is I think, only one area of “dual zoning” in Highland, and it is around the Invergarry area.

(Ian Jackson) – Yes, generally speaking we don't allow dual zoning, and after Achnasheen School was closed, Achnasheen village became part of the Gairloch HS catchment whereas Achanallt became part of the Dingwall Academy catchment, so that's where the dividing line is now. There's no dual zoning in that area.

We will consider the points the CC have made around parental transport as opposed to the bus, but we will also have to consider the potential cost to the Council. I also take the point about parts of the Shieldaig catchment being closer to Lochcarron than it is to Gairloch, but as Norma says, I don't think we would offer a choice.

(Norma Young) – We don't do dual zoning, and dual zoning would also be very detrimental to a place like Gairloch, because people who live in places like Laide might well opt to go to Ullapool, which would be detrimental to Gairloch HS. You might also get drift going to Plockton.

Q13 (follow-up) – It's a bit like the situation the Council faced when they tried to close Edinbane School, and people said they wanted to go to Portree PS or Macdiarmid PS rather than Dunvegan PS. You will appreciate that if people in Shieldaig work in Plockton, or people in Kinlochewe work in Dingwall, then it would be much easier for them to enrol their children in those schools.

A13 (Norma Young) – People in those circumstances have the option of a placing request, and if there is space in the school then we would have to grant it.

(Ian Jackson) – The only thing we don't do with placing requests is to provide transport. In effect, the Council is saying that, if we provide transport from say, Shieldaig to Gairloch, we are not going to also provide transport from Shieldaig to Plockton.

Q14 (follow-up) – So if somebody in Shieldaig wanted their child to attend Lochcarron PS, which is about 10 miles away, they wouldn't get transport?

A14 (Ian Jackson) – That's correct.

Q15 (follow-up) – And if they did want their child to attend GME in Gairloch they would have to get the bus? They wouldn't get private transport?

A15 (Ian Jackson) – That's what set out in our Proposal Paper. Part of the idea of tonight is that we have to consider all the points made, so we will take another look at that. I have to be honest though and say that we will also have to look at the potential cost to the Authority, and in effect to the taxpayer.

Q16 (follow-up) – If the children were arriving early at the Primary School as a result of traveling on the High School bus, would provision be made to ensure they were looked after?

A16 (Norma Young) – Yes, and at the end of the day. That's what we do at present. The children would be looked after by a teacher if possible or a PSA if they were not in class.

Comment from the floor - I don't think it's an issue in Gairloch as the primary school day aligns with the high school day. They have an extended lunchtime in the primary to make this work.

Q17 – Can I just ask whether the points raised tonight will be noted for the consultation, or do we have to put in a written submission?

A17 (Ian Jackson) – A note of the meeting will be produced and will be made available to all the members of the Education Committee. Anyone who also wants to also make a written submission is very welcome to do so.

There being no other comments on the Proposal Paper, the **Chairperson** reminded those present of the closing date for responses – 31 January 2020 – and of where responses should be sent, either via letter or via email, or by using the online form. A record of this meeting would be made available at least 3 weeks before the meeting of the Education Committee that considered the results of consultation. The members of the Committee would have a chance to see the note and all other representations before the meeting. Following the decision of the Committee, the minutes would be submitted to the full Council along with the decision for ratification.

MEETING CLOSED.

List of Respondents to Statutory Consultation Exercise – Proposal to Create a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Gairloch Primary School

1. Comann nam Pàrant
2. Bòrd na Gàidhlig
3. Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council
4. Aultbea Community Council

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

Travel distances

Statutory Guidance on catchment areas for Gaelic medium education (GME) states that the catchment should be an area in which the education authority thinks it is reasonable for pupils to travel to school. There is an acknowledgement in the consultation paper that children from Kinlochewe, Shieldaig and Torridon areas would have very long journeys to school. It is not reasonable or practical to establish such an extensive catchment for primary education. Children from the Shieldaig area would have much shorter travelling times if they were to attend Gaelic medium in Lochcarron Primary which may be a more attractive option for parents.

Encourage demand for GME

The Statutory Guidance places a duty on local authorities to promote and support GME as follows:

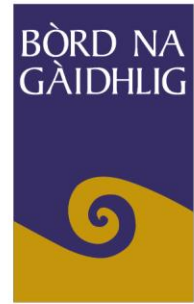
An education authority must promote the potential provision of GME and GLE and provide support for pupils and teachers in these types of Gaelic education.

The lack of provision of Gaelic as a second language in feeder primary schools was referred to at the public meeting on 22nd January. It is important that all pupils have the opportunity to study Gaelic as learners and encouraged to continue their learning at secondary.

The Education Act 2016 describes the process whereby parents can request GME provision from their local authority. Although there is a minimum number of 5 pupils given as the requirement to trigger a full assessment for GME, in some circumstances this may be lower, in order to allow provision to be established in more rural areas. For example, we are aware of one rural school where the number of pupils on the request for entry to P1 GMPE was only 3; nevertheless, this was 100% of the intake and the request for GME was successful.

We are concerned that this proposal which, as claimed, 'helps to consolidate existing provision of GME' will deter parents from making a request for GME provision in their own school at a future date. We are also concerned that any such request would be less likely to have a positive outcome.

M. Wentworth
Comann nam Pàrant
27 Faoilleach 2020



Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Response on the Highland Council Consultation on GME Catchment Area for Gairloch

1. Introduction

Bòrd na Gàidhlig welcomes the initiative to establish a school catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in the Gairloch 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.

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.

2. Consultation Information

The Highland Council says they want to establish a catchment area for the following reasons:

- 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.

3. Council Recommendation

There are 5 primary schools within the ASG. Gairloch Primary is the only one to offer GME at the primary stage.

The Council proposes that the GM catchment for Gairloch Primary will overlay the English Medium catchments of all 5 of the primary schools within the ASG, but with restrictions on transport as set out below.

Approximate travel distances and times to Gairloch Primary from the other schools are set out below:

- Bualnaluib Primary – Gairloch Primary – 13.3 miles, 24 minutes travel time.
- Kinlochewe Primary – Gairloch Primary – 20.7 miles, 30 minutes travel time.
- Poolewe Primary – Gairloch Primary – 5.7 miles, 10 minutes travel time.

- Shieldaig Primary – Gairloch Primary – 36.6 miles, 61 minutes travel time.
- Torridon Primary – Gairloch Primary – 30.1 miles, 50 minutes travel time.

6.7 In considering the principles of Best Value Highland Council has noted that to provide dedicated transport from the areas covered by the Kinlochewe, Shieldaig and Torridon catchments could result in an unacceptably high level of additional cost to the taxpayer.

6.8 The Council therefore proposes that school transport to GME at Gairloch Primary from the Poolewe and Baulnaluib catchments will normally be on the basis of utilising the existing transport for Gairloch High School. Dedicated school transport will not be provided.

4. Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education

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).

GME Catchment Areas and Placing Guidelines

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.

2.54 states:

A catchment area of 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.

Therefore, Bòrd na Gàidhlig welcomes the recommendation that a catchment area will be established for Gairloch Primary School where there is GME provision.

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.*

There are two points within this section that are important:

- a) For children within the area, travel to school should be reasonable, and
- b) There is an opportunity to attract parents to choose GME provision for their children.

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 from Shieldaig and Torridon and times are not 'reasonable' for primary-age children. However, the Bòrd would not wish any pupils who currently travel to Bun-sgoil Gheàrrloch to be disadvantaged and so recommend that the opportunity to enter GME is retained until alternative provision is available locally.

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.

5. The National Gaelic Language Plan 2018-23

One of the three priorities within National Gaelic Language Plan 2018-23 is to increase the learning of Gaelic and GME is highlighted as an area for growth. In the Bòrd's view the proposed catchment area for Gairloch 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.

Anne Macrae, Torridon & Kinlochewe Community Council

Proposed Gaelic Medium Catchment Area for Gairloch Primary School

I write in response to the proposal to establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Gairloch Primary School, as head teacher of Torridon Primary from 1992 (currently mothballed) and as Secretary to Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council.

As stated at the meeting in Gairloch on 22nd January , given the distance to travel to Gairloch ,it seems appropriate that families living on our side maintain the choice of attending either Gairloch or Lochcarron GM which is considerably closer, especially for children living in Shildaig or round the Applecross Coast.

Pupils already attend a variety of after school activities held in Lochcarron, including badminton, shinty, dancing and music tuition, also mixing with Applecross pupils and there is a strong historical link to Plockton as in the past pupils boarded there at the hostel.

For young children living in outlying areas such as Diabaig or Arrina it would be a very early start to meet the morning bus which leaves after 7am and they would not return home till well after 5 pm.

It may be easier for families living in Kinlochewe to travel to Gairloch on the bus though this could also impact on the already fragile number of pupils in our small schools.

Anyone in Achnasheen would also be closer to Lochcarron.

There is a significant difference between infants travelling in a private car and on a larger bus for longer journeys without an escort where issues such as toilets or travel sickness could arise so there would need to be someone identified to be able to help if needed.

Senior pupils can find the daily journey tiring so this could also have a potential impact on young ones.

Anne C. Macrae

Sent: 02 February 2020 19:59

To: Ian Jackson <ian.jackson@highland.gov.uk>

Subject: GM catchment for Gairloch PS.

Dear Ian,

I write on behalf of Aultbea Community Council to voice our concerns of the detrimental effect that the current situation regarding Gaelic medium provision has for our local school, children, and wider community.

In the first instance that all the resources for GM are spent in Gairloch results in zero provision for Gaelic input for Bualnaluib Primary. Maintaining the status quo not only deprives the pupils of equity of educational provision, but additionally leaves the school short of pupils who are bused to Gairloch for Gaelic medium. This can in certain circumstances have severe consequences by reducing the hours of teaching provision locally at huge detriment to the wellbeing and education of staff and pupils. It only requires a minimal dip in numbers to lose half a teacher, thus one family choosing Gaelic education for their children can have an impact on the whole of Bualnaluib primary with a knock on effect for the community.

Very little consultation took place when the Gaelic medium started in Gairloch, it would have been much fairer for all to have mobile GM teachers visiting each of the primary schools regularly, leading to many more children growing up with Gaelic, creating a sense of shared culture rather than the division and inequity currently seen, with disparity only worsening as austerity measures seem to cut mainstream education harder.

It is with some hope that we learn resources are being allocated to training teachers and delivering L2 Gaelic, and I also appreciate this is inline with National policy but would like our views considered as part of the wider debate.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Mackenzie

(Chair)



Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The Highland Council to establish a catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education at Gairloch Primary School.

February 2020

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's proposal to establish a catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education at Gairloch Primary 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.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the schools; any other users; children 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;
- individual discussions relating to the proposals;
- consideration of further information on all schools affected; and
- visits to the site of Gairloch Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

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 formal consultation ran from 9 December 2019 to 31 January 2020. The proposal paper was distributed to staff, Parent Councils and parents of pupils attending the primary schools mentioned within the proposal paper. It was also sent to members of the United Kingdom and Scottish Parliaments, trade unions, Bòrd na Gàidhlig and community councils. A notice was placed in local press. Information was available on the council's website and on social media. In the final report, the council should indicate how they have consulted children and young people.

2.3 The council convened a public meeting at which officers of the Care and Learning Services enabled eight attendees to discuss the proposals. Attendees discussed learning of Gaelic as a

second language, Gaelic Medium Education, impact of proposals on rural areas, school transport and the availability of Gaelic Medium Education at Lochcarron Primary School (The Highland Council). Four written responses were received, which raised similar issues to those aired at the public meeting. Bòrd na Gàidhlig is a statutory consultee for changes to arrangements for Gaelic Medium Education. They welcomed that a catchment area was being set for Gaelic Medium Education but had some concerns.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 This proposal demonstrates The Highland Council's continued commitment to implementing the statutory Guidance for Gaelic Education, 2017. The council is proposing a catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education at Gairloch Primary School. This will overlay the catchment areas of some or all of the other primary schools associated with Gairloch High School, depending on the results of the consultation. These primary schools offer learning through English only. They are: Bualnaluib, Kinlochewe, Poolewe, Shildaig and Torridon Primary Schools. This proposal assists the council in clarifying transport arrangements for children attending Gaelic Medium Education. It also assists the council in pursuing its duty to provide best value.

3.2 Almost all consultees supported the council in establishing a catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education. There are a few issues and concerns arising from the consultation that merit further consideration. Almost all consultees emphasised the importance of parents having access to Gaelic Medium Education. They felt that parents should influence how far they wished their children to travel for this option, within the proposed catchment area. The statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education specifies that a catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education should be an area that the education authority thinks is reasonable for children to travel. The Guidance also specifies that a catchment area should have the potential to attract parents to choose Gaelic Medium Education. The council is clear that the proposed catchment area should overlay that for Gairloch Primary School, Poolewe Primary School and Bualnaluib Primary School. Travel distances from the catchment area of these schools all fall within the council's informal arrangement to provide transport within reasonable travelling distance. This has generally been interpreted as meaning up to 15 miles, but there are numerous variations. In such cases, the council states that all children requiring transport to attend Gaelic Medium Education at Gairloch Primary School would use existing transport arrangements for young people at Gairloch High School. Should the council proceed with the proposal, the final report should detail safety arrangements for young children travelling on buses.

3.3 Some of the schools affected by this consultation are in very remote rural areas. The schools have very small pupil rolls. In one of those rural areas, some consultees are concerned that the option of Gaelic Medium Education at Gairloch Primary School will adversely impact on the future of local schools. These consultees also cite that one solution would be for all children to learn Gaelic as an additional language as part of the curriculum. This, they think, would keep children attending their local schools. HM Inspectors agree with the council, that should parents who reside within the proposed catchment area request access to Gaelic Medium Education at Gairloch Primary School, that that should be made available. In its final report, should the proposal be adopted, the council needs to be clearer that Gaelic Learner and Medium Education are both valuable learning pathways. However, they should take account of evidence that immersion brings children to fluency more quickly.

3.4 A number of consultees expressed concern about some of the proposed distances that children were expected to travel to access Gaelic Medium Education. They felt that these may not be reasonable, particularly for young children. For this reason, the council welcomed views on whether the catchment areas of Kinlochewe, Shildaig and Torridon Primary Schools should be included in the proposed catchment area. At the same time, the council is endeavouring to make

Gaelic Medium Education as widely available as possible. The council should keep demand for Gaelic Medium Education in the area under review, and engage with parents and others in ascertaining whether further Gaelic Medium Education provision could be put into place. This should be based on the terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 2016. At the time of the consultation, Torridon Primary School is mothballed. The response from Comann nam Pàrant, and Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council highlight that children residing in the catchment area of Shieldaig Primary School are considerably closer to Lochcarron Primary School than Gairloch Primary School. Gaelic Medium Education is available at Lochcarron Primary School, but it does not fall within the associated school group of Gairloch High School. The distance between Shieldaig Primary School and Lochcarron Primary School falls within the council's reasonable distance to travel. It is reported that there are existing links between Lochcarron and Shieldaig Primary Schools. An important purpose of setting catchment areas for Gaelic Medium Education is to attract parents to this option in Scottish education. At the public meeting, the council stated that they would consider further issues relating to this suggestion. The council should do some further work to ascertain the impact that this may have on educational benefits for children. Their further investigation should include a focus on the impact for children in accessing early learning and childcare and secondary education through the medium of Gaelic. The council's final report should be clear on the resulting educational benefits of their final decision. Once a decision has been made on this, the council may need to revisit section 6.11 of their proposal paper which highlights that the Gairloch High School catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education is the same area that currently exists. Bòrd na Gàidhlig in their response state that the travel distances suggested from Shieldaig and Torridon Primary Schools are not reasonable. Their response refers to Gaelic Medium Education catchment areas as overlaying a number of existing catchment areas applying 'particularly to urban areas'. The Guidance makes no distinction between urban and rural settings. The council should continue to consult Bòrd na Gàidhlig on their concerns.

3.5 There was a consensus that children who reside in the catchment area of Kinlochewe Primary School should have access to Gaelic Medium Education at Gairloch Primary School, should that be their parents' choice. It was felt that there were existing transport arrangements that could be used without incurring additional costs on the council. This approach was seen as supporting equity of access to Gaelic Medium Education.

4. Summary

4.1 Overall, the council's proposal is of educational benefit to children and parents who reside within the catchment areas for Bualnaluib, Gairloch and Poolewe Primary Schools. The proposal gives clarity to parents on how to access Gaelic Medium Education. For those residing in the catchment area for Kinlochewe Primary School, there is a consensus that parents should have the option to access Gaelic Medium Education at Gairloch Primary School, should they wish. Therefore, the catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education at Gairloch Primary School should overlay that of Bualnaluib, Gairloch, Kinlochewe and Poolewe Primary Schools. The council should define further how they will address children's safety while travelling on buses.

4.2 Given the closer proximity of the catchment area of Shieldaig Primary School to Lochcarron Primary School, it is a reasonable request that the council investigate whether children who reside in the catchment area of Shieldaig Primary School should have the option of accessing Gaelic Medium Education at Lochcarron Primary School. It is HM Inspectors' view that the shorter travelling distances may be beneficial in accessing Gaelic Medium Education at the primary stages. HM Inspectors have outlined in paragraph 3.4 some wider factors that the council should consider in making a final decision. It is important that the council's final decision takes account of the statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education to 'attract parents to choose Gaelic Medium Education

for their children'. A decision on Torrison Primary School should be made based on the mothballing arrangements that are in place. 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
February 2020**



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

Aithisg le Foghlam Alba a' dèiligeadh ri taobhan foghlaim a' mholaidh le Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd sgìre-sgoile chomharraichte a stèidheachadh airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig aig Bun-sgoil Gheàrrloch.

An Gearran 2020

1. 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 chumhachan [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 sgìre-sgoile chomharraichte a stèidheachadh airson Foghlam tro Mheadhan na Gàidhlig aig Bun-sgoil Gheàrrloch. 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 dheireannaich 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 puingeann 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.

1.2 Bheachdaich Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh air:

- a’ bhuidhe a dh’fhaodadh a bhith aig a’ mholadh air clann agus daoine òga bho na sgoiltean; luchd-cleachdaidh sam bith eile; clann 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;
- buaidhean sam bith eile a dh’fhaodadh a bhith aig a’ mholadh;
- mar a tha a’ chomhairle am beachd droch bhuidhe 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;
- conaltradhean ri daoine fa leth mu na molaidhean;
- beachdachadh air tuilleadh fiosrachaidh mu na sgoiltean air a bheil seo a’ toirt buaidh; agus
- cuairtean gu làrach Bun-sgoil Gheàrrloch, a’ gabhail a-steach conaltradh ri luchd-comhairleachaidh iomchaidh.

2. Am Pròiseas Co-chomhairleachaidh

2.1 Ghabh Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd os làimh co-chomhairleachadh air a mholadh/mholaidhean a rèir [Achd nan Sgoiltean \(Co-chomhairleachadh\) \(Alba\) 2010](#).

2.2 Lean am pròiseas co-chomhairleachaidh bho 9 Dùbhlachd 2019 gu 31 Faoilleach 2020. Chaidh am pàipear molaidh a sgaoileadh gu luchd-obrach, Comhairlean Phàrant agus pàrantan sgoilearan a tha a' frithealadh nam bun-sgoiltean a tha air an ainmeachadh sa phàipear mholaidh. Chaidh a chur cuideachd gu buill Pàrlamaidean na Rìoghachd Aonaichte agus na h-Alba, aonaidhean-ciùird, Bòrd na Gàidhlig agus comhairlean coimhearsnachd. Chaidh sanas a chur dhan phàipear ionadail. Bha fiosrachadh ri fhaotainn air làrach-lìn na comhairle agus air na-meadhanan sòisealta. San aithisg dheireannach bu chòir dhan chomhairle innse mar a rinn iad co-chomhairleachadh le clann agus daoine òga.

2.3 Chùm a' chomhairle coinneamh phoblach aig an tug oifigearan Seirbheisean Cùraim agus Ionnsachaidh cothrom do na h-ochdnar a bha an làthair conaltradh a dhèanamh mu na molaidhean. Bhruidhinn an fheadhainn a bha an làthair mun Ghàidhlig mar dhàrna cànan, Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig, buaidh nam molaidhean air sgìrean dùthchail, còmhhdhail-sgoile agus gun robh Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig ri fhaotainn aig Bun-sgoil Loch Carrainn (Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd). Chaidh ceithir freagairtean fhaighinn ann an sgrìobhadh, a bha a' togail air cùisean coltach ri sin a chaidh ainmeachadh aig a' choinneimh phoblaich. Tha Bòrd na Gàidhlig na bhuidheann comhairleachaidh reachdail mu atharrachaidhean a thaobh Foghlam tro Mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Chuir iad fàilte gun robhar a' stèidheachadh sgìre-sgoile chomharraichte airson Foghlam tro Mheadhan na Gàidhlig ach bha beagan iomagain orra.

3. Taobhan Foghlaim a' Mholaidh

3.1 Tha am moladh seo a' comharrachadh dealas leantainneach Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd ann am buileachadh an Stiùiridh reachdail air Foghlam Gàidhlig, 2017. Tha a' chomhairle a' moladh sgìre-sgoile chomharraichte airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig aig Bun-sgoil Gheàrrloch. Bidh seo a' gabhail a-steach sgìrean-sgoile cuid no a h-uile bun-sgoil eile a tha co-cheangailte ri Àrd-sgoil Gheàrrloch, a rèir toraidhean na co-chomhairleachaidh. Tha na bun-sgoiltean sin a' tabhann ionnsachadh tro mheadhan na Beurla a-mhàin. Is iad sin: Bun-sgoiltean Bhuaile na Lùib, Cheann Loch Iù, Phol Iù, Shìldeig agus Thoirbheartan. Tha am moladh seo a' toirt taic don chomhairle ann a bhith a' soilleireachadh ullachaidhean còmhhdhail airson clann a tha a' frithealadh Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig. Tha e cuideachd a' toirt taic don chomhairle ann a bhith a' coileanadh a dhleistanais gus an luach as fheàrr a thabhann.

3.2 Cha mhòr nach robh an luchd-co-chomhairleachaidh air fad a' toirt taic dhan chomhairle ann a bhith a' stèidheachadh sgìre-sgoile chomharraichte airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig. Tha beagan chùisean agus uallachaidhean ag èirigh bhon cho-chomhairleachadh a tha airidh air tuilleadh beachdachaidh a dhèanamh orra. Cha mhòr nach robh an luchd-co-chomhairleachaidh air fad a' cur cudrom air cho riatanach 's a bha e cothrom a bhith aig pàrantan air Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig. Bha iad a' faireachdainn gum bu chòir do phàrantan buaidh a thoirt air an astar a bha iad a' miannachadh a shìubhladh an cuid chloinne airson na roghainn seo, taobh a-staigh na sgìre-sgoile a bha air a moladh. Tha an Stiùireadh reachdail air Foghlam Gàidhlig a' comharrachadh gum bu chòir dhan sgìre-sgoile airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig a bhith mar astar a tha an t-ùghdarras-foghlaim dhen bheachd a bhiodh reusanta do chlann a shiubhal. Tha an Stiùireadh cuideachd a' comharrachadh gum bu chòir do chomas a bhith aig sgìre-sgoile pàrantan a thàladh gu bhith a' taghadh Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig. Tha a' chomhairle soilleir gum bu chòir dhan sgìre-sgoile a thathar a' moladh sgìre-sgoile Bun-sgoil Gheàrrloch, Bun-sgoil Phol Iù agus Bun-sgoil Bhuaile na Lùib a ghabhail a-steach. Tha na h-astaran siubhail bho sgìrean-sgoile

nan sgoiltean sin uile taobh a-staigh ullachadh neo-fhoirmeil na comhairle a thaobh còmhdhail a thabhann taobh a-staigh astar siubhail reusanta. Tha seo gu coitcheann air a mhìneachadh mar suas gu 15 mìle, ach tha iomadh caochladh ann. Anns a leithid sin de chùisean, tha a' chomhairle ag ràdh gum bu chòir don chloinn air fad a tha a' cur feum air còmhdhail gus a dhol gu Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig ann am Bun-sgoil Gheàrrloch, na h-ullachaidhean còmhdhail a tha ann aig an àm a tha an làthair airson dhaoine òga a tha ann an Àrd-sgoil Gheàrrloch a chleachdadh. Nan leanadh a' chomhairle air adhart leis a' mholadh, bu chòir dhan aithisg dheireannaich mìneachadh a dhèanamh air na h-ullachaidhean sàbhailteachd airson chlann òga a tha a' siubhal air busaichean.

3.3 Tha cuid de na sgoiltean a tha fo bhuidhe na co-chomhairleachaidh seo ann an ceàrnaidhean dùthchail gu math iomallach. Is e àireamh glè bheag de chlann a tha sna sgoiltean. Ann an aon de na sgìrean dùthchail sin, tha cuid de na co-chomhairlichean fo uallach gun toir an roghainn Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig ann am Bun-sgoil Gheàrrloch droch bhuidhe air an àm ri teachd airson nan sgoiltean ionadail. Tha na co-chomhairlichean sin cuideachd ag ràdh gur e aon fhuasgladh a' chlann air fad a bhith ag ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig na cànan a bharrachd mar phàirt den churraicealam. Tha iad a' smaoinichadh gun cumadh seo a' chlann gu bhith a' frithealadh nan sgoiltean ionadail aca. Tha luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh ag aontachadh ris a' chomhairle, nam biodh pàrantan a tha a' fuireach san sgìre-sgoile a thathar a' moladh ag iarraidh cothrom air Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig ann am Bun-sgoil Gheàrrloch, gum bu chòir cead a thoirt dhaibh. San aithisg dheireannaich aige, nan deigheadh aontachadh ris a' mholadh, feumaidh a' chomhairle a bhith nas soilleir gu bheil Gàidhlig Luchd-ionnsachaidh agus Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig le chèile nan slighean ionnsachaidh luachmhor. Ach, bu chòir dhaibh cunntas a ghabhail de fhianais gu bheil bogadh a' toirt clann gu fileantas tòrr nas luaithe.

3.4 Bha grunnan de na co-chomhairlichean iomagaineach mu chuid de na h-astaran a bhathar a' sùileachadh a shiùbhladh clann gus cothrom fhaighinn air Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig. Bha iad a' faireachdainn gur dòcha nach robh iad sin reusanta, gu h-àraidh airson clann òg. Airson an adhbhair seo, chuir a' chomhairle fàilte air beachdan am bu chòir sgìrean-sgoile Bun-sgoiltean Cheann Loch Lù, Shildeig agus Thoirbheartan a bhith air an gabhail a-steach anns an sgìre-sgoile chomharraichte a bhathar a' moladh. Aig an aon àm, tha a' chomhairle ag amas air Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig a bhith ri fhaotainn cho farsaing 's a ghabhas. Bu chòir dhan chomhairle iartas airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig san sgìre a chumail fo lèirmheas, agus conaltradh le pàrantan agus daoine eile ann a bhith a' faighinn a-mach am b' urrainn do thuilleadh solair Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig a bhith air a chur ann an àite. Bu chòir dhan seo a bhith stèidhichte air Achd (Foghlam) Alba 2016. Aig àm a' cho-chomhairleachaidh, bha Bun-sgoil Thoirbheartan dùinte car ùine. Tha am freagairt a fhuaras bho Chomann nam Pàrant agus Comhairle Coimhearsnachd Thoirbheartan agus Cheann Loch Lù a' soilleireachadh gu bheil a' chlann a tha a' còmhnaidh ann an sgìre-sgoile chomharraichte Bhun-sgoil Shildeig tòrr mòr nas fhaisge air Bun-sgoil Loch Carrainn na tha iad air Bun-sgoil Gheàrrloch. Tha Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig ri fhaotainn aig Bun-sgoil Loch Carrainn, ach chan eil e taobh a-staigh buidheann nan sgoiltean co-cheangailte ri Àrd-sgoil Gheàrrloch. Tha an t-astar eadar Bun-sgoil Shildeig agus Bun-sgoil Loch Carrainn taobh a-staigh an astar-siubhail a tha a' chomhairle a' meas reusanta. Tha e air innse gu bheil ceanglaichean ann a-cheana eadar Bun-sgoiltean Shildeig agus Loch Carrainn. Is e adhbhar cudromach mu bhith a' suidheachadh sgìrean-sgoile chomharraichte airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig pàrantan a tharraing gu bhith a' taghadh na roghainn seo a thaobh foghlam ann an Alba. Aig a' choinneamh phoblaich, thuir a' chomhairle gum beachdaicheadh iad air tuilleadh chùisean co-cheangailte ris a' mholadh seo. Bu chòir dhan chomhairle tuilleadh obrach a dhèanamh gus a' bhuidhe a dh'fhaodadh a bhith aig seo air sochairean foghlaim airson clann, a dhearbhadh. Bu chòir dhan tuilleadh rannsachaidh seo a bhith a' gabhail a-steach cuimse air a' bhuidhe a bhiodh aige air clann a thaobh cothrom air tràth-ionnsachadh agus cùram-chloinne agus foghlam àrd-sgoile tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Bu chòir do dh'aithisg dheireannach na comhairle a bhith soilleir

mu na sochairean foghlaim a thigeadh mar thoradh air an co-dhùnadh deireannach. Aon uair 's gun tigeas gu co-dhùnadh mun seo, is dòcha gum feum a' chomhairle sùil eile a thoirt air earrann 6.11 sa phàipear-molaidh aca, a tha a' soilleireachadh gur e sgìre-sgoile chomharraichte Àrd-sgoil Gheàrrloch airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig, an sgìre-sgoile cheudna 's a tha ann an-dràsta. Tha Bòrd na Gàidhlig san fhreagairt acasan ag ràdh nach eil na h-astaran siubhail a thathar a' moladh bho Shìldeag agus Thoirbheartan reusanta. Tha am freagairt a' togail air sgìrean-sgoile chomharraichte airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig a bhith stèidhichte air grunnan sgìrean-sgoile chomharraichte a tha ann a-cheana 'gu sònraichte airson sgìrean bailteil'. Chan eil an Stiùireadh a' dèanamh eadar-dhealachadh eadar suidheachaidhean bailteil agus dùthchail. Bu chòir dhan chomhairle leantainn air adhart a' co-chomhairleachadh le Bòrd na Gàidhlig mu na h-uallachaidhean a tha orra.

3.5 Bhathar ag aontachadh gum bu chòir do chlann a tha a' còmhnaidh ann an sgìre-sgoile Bhun-sgoil Cheann Loch Iù cothrom a bhith aca air Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig aig Bun-sgoil Gheàrrloch, nam b' e sin roghainn am pàrantan. Bhathar a' faireachdainn gun robh ullachaidhean còmhaidh ann a-cheana a dh'fhaodadh a bhith air an cleachdadh nach adhbhraicheadh cosgaisean a bharrachd dhan chomhairle. Bha am modh-obrach seo air fhaicinn mar a bhith a' toirt taic do cho-ionannachd cothruim air Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig.

4. Geàrr-iomradh

4.1 San fharsaingeachd, tha moladh na comhairle na shochair foghlaim do chlann agus pàrantan a tha a' còmhnaidh sna sgìrean-sgoile chomharraichte airson Bun-sgoiltean Bhuaile na Lùib, Gheàrrloch agus Phol Iù. Tha am moladh a' soilleireachadh do phàrantan mar a gheibh iad cothrom air Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig. A thaobh na feadhainn a tha a' còmhnaidh san sgìre-sgoile chomharraichte airson Bun-sgoil Cheann Loch Iù, thathar a' co-aontachadh gum bu chòir an cothrom a bhith aig pàrantan air Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig ann am Bun-sgoil Gheàrrloch, nam biodh iad airson sin a roghnachadh. Mar sin, bu chòir don sgìre-sgoile chomharraichte airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig ann am Bun-sgoil Gheàrrloch, Bun-sgoiltean Bhuaile na Lùib, Gheàrrloch, Cheann Loch Iù agus Phol Iù a ghabhail a-steach. Bu chòir dhan chomhairle tuilleadh mìneachaidh a dhèanamh air an dòigh anns an dèilig iad ri sàbhailteachd chloinne an uair a bhios iad a' siubhal air busaichean.

4.2 Leis gu bheil sgìre-sgoile chomharraichte Bhun-sgoil Shìldeig nas fhaisg air Bun-sgoil Loch Carrainn, tha e na iarrtas reusanta gum bu chòir dhan chomhairle sgrùdadh a dhèanamh am bu chòir dhan chloinn a tha a' còmhnaidh ann an sgìre-sgoile chomharraichte Bhun-sgoil Shìldeig an cothrom a bhith aca air Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig ann am Bun-sgoil Loch Carrainn. Is e beachd Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh gur dòcha gum biodh na h-astaran siubhail nas giorra nam buannachd ann a bhith a' faighinn cothrom air Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig aig ìrean na bun-sgoile. Tha Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh air mìneachadh ann am paragraf 3.4 cuid de bhun-chùisean nas fharsainge a bu chòir dhan chomhairle a ghabhail a-steach ann a bhith a' tighinn gu co-dhùnadh deireannach. Tha e cudromach gum bi co-dhùnadh deireannach na comhairle a' gabhail a-steach an Stiùiridh reachdail air Foghlam Gàidhlig gus 'pàrantan a thàladh gu bhith a' taghadh Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig airson an cloinne'. Bu chòir a thighinn gu co-dhùnadh mu Bhun-sgoil Thoirbheartan stèidhichte air na h-ullachaidhean a thaobh an dùnaidh car ùine a tha ann an àite. Feumaidh a' chomhairle leantainn air adhart a' conaltradh leis an luchd-ùidh air fad, a' gabhail a-steach Bòrd na Gàidhlig, ann a bhith a' dèiligeadh ris na h-uallachaidhean a tha air am-mìneachadh ann an earrann trì den aithisg seo.

Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh An Gearran 2020

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

The proposal is to establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Gairloch 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 Gairloch Primary School. The new catchment will overlay the current English Medium (EM) catchments of Gairloch Primary School, Poolewe Primary School, and Bualnaluib Primary School. Particular arrangements will apply for transport to Gairloch from the other catchment areas.

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

If implemented as drafted, the proposed GM catchment for Gairloch Primary School will include all 6 primary school catchments within the Gairloch ASG. One of the schools, Torridon Primary, is currently mothballed. The distances and travel times to Gairloch from the catchment areas of Kinlochewe, Shieldaig and Torridon mean that any children travelling to Gairloch would have very long journeys to school. The Council would particularly welcome views on whether the catchment areas of these schools should be included within the proposed GM catchment.

Any identified parental demand for local provision of GME from within any of the schools featured above would be assessed in accordance within the terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 2016.

Highland Council is making this Proposal to comply with Statutory Guidance issued by Bòrd na Gàidhlig under Section 9 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. Part

1 of the Statutory Guidance specifically relates to the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 and the duty placed on education authorities to promote and support Gaelic education. The Guidance includes a specific requirement on local authorities to create GM catchment areas for schools that offer Gaelic Medium Education (GME).

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

SUMMARY OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Proposal Paper Published

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

- Gairloch Primary School
- Bualnaluib Primary School
- Kinlochewe Primary School
- Poolewe Primary School
- Shieldaig Primary School
- Gairloch 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 Office

The Fingal Centre

Portree

IV51 9 ES

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, The Fingal Centre, Portree, IV51 9ES

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 Gairloch Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (ii) Parents of pupils attending Bualnaluib Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (iii) Parents of pupils attending Kinlochewe Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (iv) Parents of pupils attending Poolewe Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (v) Parents of pupils attending Shieldaig 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.

Advertisement in Local Media

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

Consultation Period

The consultation for this Proposal will run from 9 December 2019 and will end on 31 January 2020. 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:

Gairloch High School, 22 January 2020 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.

Responses to the Proposals

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

Norma Young

Area Care and Learning Manager (West)

Care and Learning Office

The Fingal Centre

Portree

IV51 9ES

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, 31 January 2020 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 10 February 2020, 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 28 February 2020. 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 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 Council 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.

The Council intends to publish its Report in April 2020 prior to submission to the relevant Council Committee in May 2020. 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 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, and the Council must comply with this Guidance. 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 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:
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig has issued statutory guidance recommending that local authorities create catchment areas for GME.
 - Highland Council has not previously specified catchment areas 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).
- 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 local elected councillors, with staff of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and with the Head Teachers of each of the primary schools in the area, as well as with the Head Teacher of Gairloch High School. Contact was also made with the Parent Councils of each of the above schools, and with all the local Community Councils. An explanation of the Proposal was provided and comments invited. At the time of writing only one response had been received, from Shialdaig Community Council. The Community Council felt it was a long way for primary school children to travel daily from Shialdaig, but ultimately it would be down to parental choice. The Community Council understood the financial constraints on travel and the proposed provision for pupils to use the High School bus.

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

- 4.1 There are 6 primary schools within the ASG, although one, Torridon Primary, is currently mothballed. Gairloch Primary is the only one to offer GME at the primary stage. Gairloch High also offers GME.

Gairloch Primary School

- 5.1 Gairloch Primary is located within the village of the same name. Presently the school has 46 pupils across P1-7 in English Medium classes and 17 pupils in Gàidhlig Medium classes. There are also 9 children in the English medium nursery and 3 in Sgoil-àraich (Gàidhlig Medium pre-school nursery).
- 5.2 Of the 17 GM pupils at present, all but one are from within the Gairloch Primary catchment itself.
- 5.3 The school is co-located with Gairloch High School and has good quality accommodation with 5 teaching classrooms, a GP room, nursery, library, open resource area, staffroom, and office. There is a tarred playground area and access to the High School playing field. Meals are provided via the High School canteen.

Proposed School Catchments for GME

- 6.1 There are 5 other primary schools within the Gairloch ASG. Approximate travel distances and times to Gairloch Primary from the other schools are set out below:

Bualnaluib Primary – Gairloch Primary – 13.3 miles, 24 minutes travel time.

Kinlochewe Primary – Gairloch Primary – 20.7 miles, 30 minutes travel time.

Poolewe Primary – Gairloch Primary – 5.7 miles, 10 minutes travel time.

Shieldaig Primary – Gairloch Primary – 36.6 miles, 61 minutes travel time.

Torrison Primary – Gairloch Primary – 30.1 miles, 50 minutes travel time.

- 6.2 It should be noted though, that each of the schools in the ASG has a wide catchment area, and travel from the furthest ends of each catchment will be considerably longer than the distances and times given above.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 It may be argued that it is not reasonable or practical to include the catchments of Kinlochewe, Shieldaig or Torrison in the Gairloch GM catchment, due to the distances and travel times involved, particularly from more outlying points in those catchments. The Council is however aware that local informal practice has always advertised the GM Department at Gairloch Primary as being available to any pupil within the Gairloch ASG. Given this historic expectation and practice within the area, the Council proposes to define the new GM catchment to include all of the ASG, subject to comments received during the consultation.
- 6.6 The Council therefore proposes that the GM catchment for Gairloch Primary will overlay the English Medium catchments of all 6 of the primary schools within the ASG, but with restrictions on transport as set out below.
- 6.7 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 Kinlochewe, Shieldaig and Torrison catchments could result in an unacceptably high level of additional cost to the taxpayer.
- 6.8 The Council therefore proposes that school transport to GME at Gairloch Primary from the Poolewe and Bualnaluib catchments will normally be on the

basis of utilising the existing transport for Gairloch High School. Dedicated school transport will not be provided.

- 6.9 The map at **Appendix B** shows the current school catchments for the Gairloch ASG (outlined in red), with the proposed GM catchment outlined in blue.
- 6.10 No changes are proposed for these catchments in respect of English Medium education.
- 6.11 For the purposes of GME, the Gairloch 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. It is acknowledged that bilingualism has educational benefits as it provides the user with a better sense of the structure of language, and bilingual children often find it easier to pick up other languages. The continued availability of Gaelic medium education in the Gairloch ASG, as evidenced by the new catchment, will provide children with the opportunity to develop these skills for life.
- 7.3 The creation of a GM catchment area will demonstrate the Council's commitment to the long-term future of Gaelic Medium education. Evidence of this commitment may help with the known problem with "drop-out" from GME.

Effects on School Transport

- 8.1 Within the Gairloch Primary School catchment, pupils attending GME are offered school transport on the same basis as children attending English Medium education. Paragraph 6.8 above explains why no other effects on school transport are anticipated.

Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements

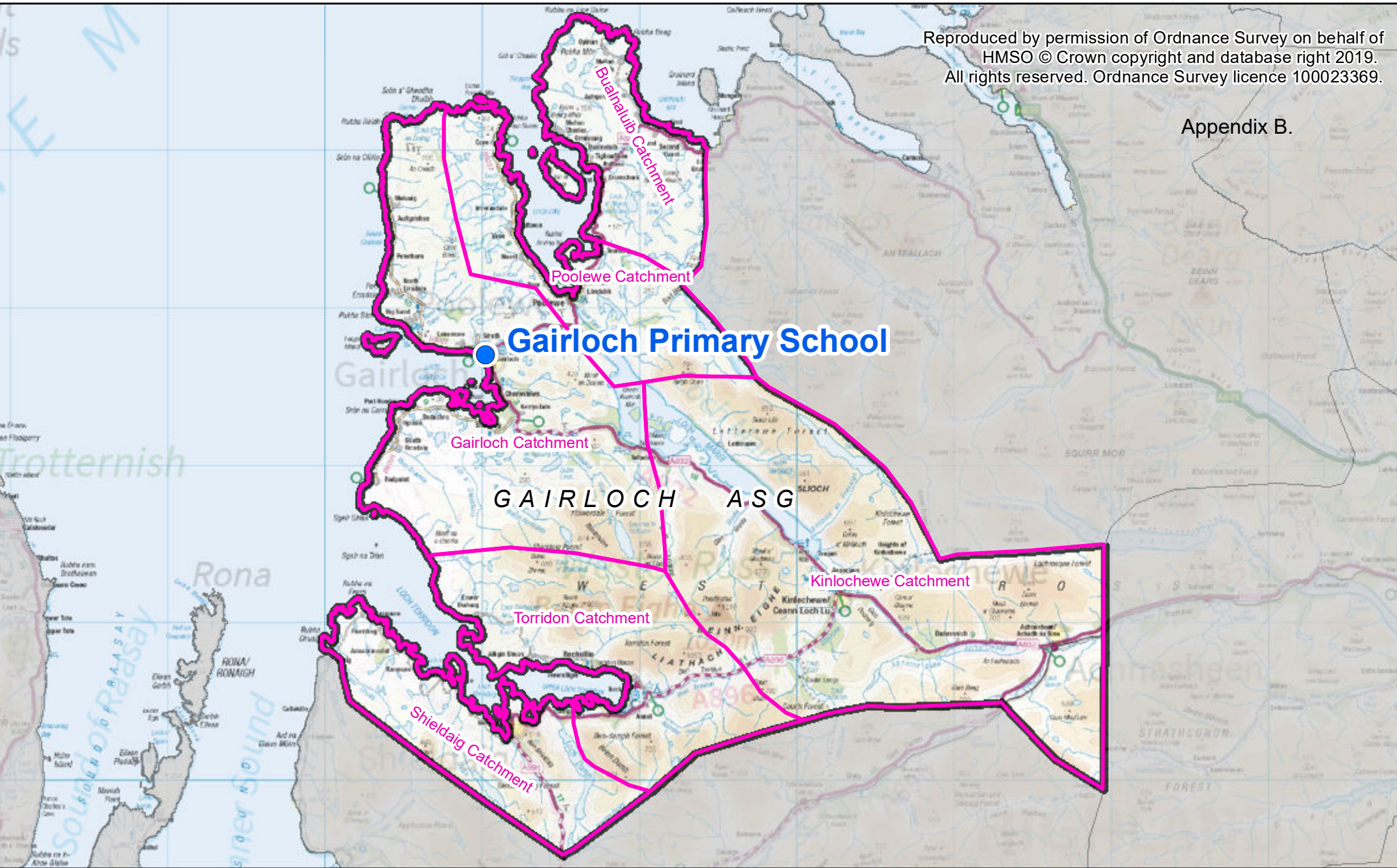
- 9.1 At the present time there are 17 children attending GME at Gairloch Primary, all but one of whom are from the Gairloch catchment area itself. Because of the distances involved in travelling from most of the other catchments into Gairloch, the Council does not expect any significant impact on school rolls. Nor do we expect any impact on staff within the schools of the Gairloch 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 Gairloch 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 relevant Committee of the Highland Council.



Proposed Gairloch Primary School Gaelic Medium Catchment

