

Agenda Item	12.
Report No	EDU/7/22

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Education Committee

Date: 24 February 2022

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

Report By: Executive Chief Officer – Education 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 Newtonmore 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). Newtonmore Primary School is the only primary school within the Kingussie Associated School Group (ASG) to offer GME. It is proposed to formally create a GM catchment that overlays the current English Medium catchments of Newtonmore Primary School, Alvie Primary School, Aviemore Primary School, Gergask Primary School, and Kingussie Primary School.

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 (Appendices 3i-3iii) and the report from Education Scotland (Appendices 4 and 5); and
 - iii. agree to recommend to the Council that it creates a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Newtonmore 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 Newtonmore Primary 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) – No implications are anticipated as a result of this report.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – No implications are anticipated as a result of this report.
- 3.5 Risk – Failure to create a GM catchment would mean non-compliance with the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education.
- 3.6 Gaelic - The statutory consultation has been taken forward as per the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

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 three written responses were received, one from Bòrd na Gàidhlig, one from Comann nam Pàrant, and one from a local parent. This last response expressed concern at potential capacity issues at Newtonmore PS, and is addressed in the "Responses" section of Appendix 1 (see pages 5-8). A list of those who attended the public meeting can be found at the head of the note of the meeting, at Appendix 2.
- 4.3 In their responses to consultation, both Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Comann nam Pàrant expressed support for the Proposal.
- 4.4 In their report, Education Scotland noted that the proposal demonstrates The Highland Council's continued commitment to implementing the statutory Guidance for Gaelic Education, and that 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. They suggested that the Council should expand further on the curricular benefits from this proposal, specify how the proposal will help the council meet the targets they have set as statutory in their Gaelic language planning for a 3-18 immersion curriculum, and more clearly connect this proposal with the objectives of their Gaelic Language Plan. The issues raised by Education Scotland are also addressed in the "Responses" section of Appendix 1 (see pages 10-13).

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 31 January 2022. Any further representations will be tabled for consideration by Members.
- 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 2022

Authors: Brian Porter, Head of Education Resources
Ian Jackson, Education Officer (Resources)



HIGHLAND COUNCIL

EDUCATION AND LEARNING SERVICE

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

This report has been prepared following a review of the proposal to establish a Gaelic Medium (GM) catchment area for Newtonmore 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 online on 31 August 2021.
- The report from Education Scotland.

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

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1.0 Background

- 1.1 Highland Council's Education Committee, at its meeting on 20 May 2021, agreed that a statutory consultation be undertaken on the proposal to establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Newtonmore Primary School.
- 1.2 The Proposal Paper suggested that the new catchment will overlay the current English Medium (EM) catchments of Newtonmore Primary School, Alvie Primary School, Aviemore Primary School, Gergask Primary School, and Kingussie Primary School. Particular arrangements would apply to school transport from the areas outwith the Newtonmore PS catchment.
- 1.3 The Proposal Paper also suggested formalising the current arrangements relating to Gàidhlig Medium Education (GME) in Kingussie High School, under which the catchment area for Kingussie 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 31 May 2021 to Friday 3 September 2021. 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 Newtonmore Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
 - (ii) Parents of pupils attending Alvie Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
 - (iii) Parents of pupils attending Aviemore Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
 - (iv) Parents of pupils attending Gergask Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
 - (v) Parents of pupils attending Kingussie Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
 - (vi) Parents of pupils attending Kingussie High School;
 - (vii) The Parent Councils of each of the above schools;
 - (viii) Staff of the schools listed above;
 - (ix) Members of Parliament and Members of the Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal;
 - (x) Trade union representatives;
 - (xi) All Community Councils for the areas covered by the Proposal;
 - (xii) Bòrd na Gàidhlig;
 - (xiii) Education Scotland;
- 2.3 The proposal document was advertised on the Highland Council website.
- 2.4 A public meeting was held online on 31 August 2021. The meeting was advertised in advance on the Highland Council website and in the *Badenoch and Strathspey Herald*. The note of the meeting is at **Appendix 2**.
- 2.5 The public meeting had originally been scheduled for 24 August at Newtonmore Primary School, but was postponed and re-arranged online due to a local recrudescence of COVID-19 cases.
- 2.6 Following receipt of written representations received by Highland Council and consideration of oral representations made at the public meeting, officials reviewed the proposals.
- 2.6 The outcome of this review process is reflected in the response, conclusion and recommendations outlined below.

3.0 Responses received

- 3.1 A list of those who responded in writing during the public consultation is at **Appendix 3**. There were 3 written responses received during the consultation period. Copies of these responses can also be found at **Appendices 3i-3iii**.

Two responses were submitted on behalf of organisations (Comann nam Pàrant, and Bòrd na Gàidhlig), and one from a parent.

- 3.2 Although the one parental response was received after the deadline, the Council had agreed to accept this submission, due to the postponement of the public meeting.

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.

Issue 1

Bòrd na Gàidhlig welcomes the recommendation that a catchment area will be established for Newtonmore Primary School where there is GME provision. The education authority has considered both reasonable travel distance and arrangements for pupils and parents.

Response 1

The Council notes and welcomes this response.

Issue 2

Comann nam Pàrant welcomes the formalisation of a school catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in the Newtonmore area.

Although we [i.e., CnamP] agree with the setting of the catchment, should parents in the catchments of any of the other associated schools submit a request in the future for GME in line with the Education Act (Scotland) 2016, we trust that Highland Council will follow the process for requests as set out in Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education.

CnamP also welcomes the extension to the nursery at Newtonmore Primary and hope this will mean delivery of 1140 hours in Gaelic which has the potential to attract more families to GME.

Response 2

The Council welcomes the response of Comann nam Pàrant, and confirms that any future parental demand for local provision of GME from within the Alvie, Aviemore, Gergask, and Kingussie school catchments would be assessed in accordance with the Education (Scotland) Act 2016.

The GM nursery at Newtonmore PS is already offering 1140 hours per year of childcare/pre-school education.

Issue 3

When the Proposal was first published, a number of assumptions and sweeping and provocative statements were made regarding future class sizes at Newtonmore Primary. In particular, it was predicted that, based on recent historical patterns of enrolment, the school would eventually have 3 GM and 3 EM classes. The initial Proposal Paper left out some vital documentation to put this information in context. These included the information on the Highland Council's pupil to class size ratio as well as the Highland Council's methodology for forecasting pupil rolls.

Response 3

The above information is not normally included in Proposal Papers, and the class size ratio and methodology for forecasting were not the subject of this consultation exercise. The information was provided after being requested, and during the consultation period.

The Council does not accept that the omission of the above information constitutes a material consideration to the Proposal. The increase anticipated in children accessing GME in the next few years, and the decrease in numbers accessing EME, are forecast from the number of current nursery enrolments in Newtonmore Primary School, as well as being extrapolated from historic trends. They are thus a reflection of enrolments made prior to this Proposal being issued, and cannot be attributed to the creation of the proposed catchment.

The Council's forecast of a fall in the EM numbers at Newtonmore PS is expected to occur regardless of whether or not we create a GM catchment. The forecast derives from the expectation that more parents from Newtonmore itself will choose GME in preference to EME.

Issue 4

There is a fear that by bringing in pupils in from outwith the Newtonmore catchment area (regardless of the reason, GME or otherwise) whilst the school roll is lower than previous years, that there will be no space for future pupils from Newtonmore should numbers rise. It is unknown how many pupils are likely to request GME provision from outwith the Newtonmore catchment area following the introduction of this initiative. Whilst parents have been provided with some reassurance in subsequent correspondence, it is surprising that this reassurance was not included in the initial Proposal.

Response 4

Paragraph 5.1 of the Proposal Paper (Appendix A) set out that Newtonmore PS currently has 6 classrooms. During the current session the school has 77 pupils in English Medium education and 33 in Gàidhlig medium education. This means the school has 4 EM and 2 GM classes. The school could have up to 96 pupils in the 4 EM classes and up to 47 in the 2 GM classes, so at the moment the school is a long way short of those figures. Because the vast majority of pupils in the school are from Newtonmore itself, any rise in the GM roll would likely to be accompanied by a fall in the EM roll, or vice versa. For the forthcoming two years, the school is expected to have 3 EM and 2 GM classes.

The school's capacity would only be breached if there was a situation where the EM roll remained at 72 or above (four classes) and the GM roll increased to 48 or above (three classes). At present this seems a very unlikely scenario, that could only arise if there were an unexpected and significant increase in GM pupils coming from other parts of the area. The Council has so far created 11 GM catchments for primary schools and has not seen such a pattern develop elsewhere. There is therefore, no particular reason to suppose that the creation of the GM catchment would create a sudden increase in demand for GME.

In the Council's view the fear expressed in Issue 4 is therefore unjustified, and it was for that reason that the issue was not addressed in detail in the Proposal Paper.

Issue 5

There is no clarity regarding what contingencies have been planned to address the situation of future oversubscribing at Newtonmore PS, should it arise. Whilst options have been discussed, they are not a foregone conclusion. Comments made at the public meeting and in subsequent correspondence would suggest there is no plan.

Response 5

It is not possible for Highland Council to prepare and announce detailed plans for hypothetical scenarios that may or may not occur many years into the future. As was highlighted at the meeting, we have already created 11 GM catchments in Highland, and we are not aware that any have produced a flood of GM pupils coming in from other areas. In the unlikely event of this happening, the detailed solution would need to be considered at the time. The Council has however given the assurance that we will not send pupils from Newtonmore to other schools to accommodate GM pupils from outwith Newtonmore.

Issue 6

Why has Kingussie Primary School not been seriously considered as a suitable base for primary GME learning? The school roll has historically been lower than that of Newtonmore Primary School. The physical site of Kingussie Primary School is larger and able to expand to cater for future demand. The proximity of Kingussie High School's already established secondary GME provision to Kingussie Primary School is close. If pupils are to be transported to a school then the proximity of Kingussie to Newtonmore is in real terms negligible and will not greatly impact those pupils already being transported. Appendix B of the GME proposal quite clearly demonstrates this fact. Again, this would ensure sustainability in the long term rather than looking for additional provision elsewhere.

Response 6

As mentioned elsewhere, the vast majority of the current GM pupils at Newtonmore Primary School are from within the Newtonmore catchment itself. Very few pupils currently travel from the other communities within the ASG. We anticipate that moving the GM provision from Newtonmore PS to Kingussie PS would lead to a drop-off in the numbers attending GME, as at least some, and possibly many, of the current GM pupils would not wish to travel to Kingussie to continue to access GME.

Legally, such a proposal would represent the closure of the GM Department at Newtonmore PS and the opening of a new provision at Kingussie PS. The first element of the above would require a full-scale statutory consultation, involving ratification by Scottish Ministers. Such proposals can only be advanced on the basis of educational benefits to the pupils. There would therefore need to be a very strong educational justification to offset the inevitable disruption to pupils, and the likely fall-off in the numbers attending GME. At present no such justification exists.

Issue 7

If Newtonmore Primary School is to be used as the base for GME primary education, then sustainability and physical capacity is the main concern. The Council's informal suggestion to provide additional provision at alternative neighbouring schools seems to concede that Newtonmore Primary School lacks the physical space to extend further. Whereas Kingussie Primary School does. I am also concerned that this contingency was not contained within the original proposal document and needs to be included following any policy decision and ratified at member level should Newtonmore Primary School be chosen as the ASG centre for GME primary education.

Response 7

In practice, Newtonmore Primary School is already the centre for GME primary education within the Kingussie Associated School Group. There are already pupils attending GME from other school catchments within the ASG. This proposal merely formalises the existing arrangements, that have arisen through custom and practice.

The Council has previously commented that pressure on capacity would only arise if there are a substantial number of enrolments in GME from Kingussie and Aviemore (the other catchments being probably too small to contribute a large number of pupils). Were that situation to arise, it would be sensible to examine the possibility of providing GME in those schools, rather than have large numbers travelling daily to Newtonmore. If such provision was set up, it would almost certainly be in addition to the provision at Newtonmore, rather than as a replacement of it. Closure of the GM Department within Newtonmore Primary School would be regarded as the equivalent of a full school closure, and would be subject to statutory consultation on the same basis.

Issue 8

The initial proposal document has been flawed from the outset. The proposal has omitted crucial and important facts. With public meetings held on-line, through no fault of HC – but due to COVID-19 restrictions, it has prevented full and effective public consultation on the matter. Whilst I am grateful to the Council for allowing the above document to be submitted beyond the deadline (September 3rd), as a member of the public, I should not have had to continually probe to fully discover the true implications of this proposal. Indeed it was echoed at the Parent Council that the proposal had changed since its original publication. The lack of clarity and disclosure has led to friction within the community – where some have suggested there is a struggle for resources between EME and GME provision. Some have even suggested that this has something to do with the Head Teacher being a Gaelic speaker. This is indeed not the case.

I am in full support of GME provision. I have been to the Lochaber GME primary school in Caol (Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar), which is a fantastic facility. I wish there was the same opportunity in this area. I am only concerned that given the limited facilities available in Newtonmore – trying to ‘fit a quart into a pint pot’ is not a sustainable solution.

Response 8

The issue of the information provided in the Proposal Paper is addressed at Response 3 above, and that of the limited capacity at Newtonmore is addressed at Response 4. The Parent Council minutes for the meeting in question do not record the view that the Proposal had changed from its original publication. Whilst the minutes are only a summary of the

discussion, the issue does not appear to have been a significant one for the Parent Council.

It is disappointing to hear that the Proposal has caused friction within the community. The Highland Council welcomes the free expression of views in response to its consultation exercises, and there is no reason to regard the Proposal as a struggle for resources between GME and EME.

- 4.2 The note of the public meeting is at Appendix 2. Three questions were raised and were answered during the meeting. The questions covered issues that were also raised in the written responses and are addressed above.

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 All consultees valued that Gaelic Medium Education was an option available to parents. From year to year, enrolments in early learning and childcare and P1 determine pupil uptake for Gaelic Medium Education. Projecting and confirming the uptake for Gaelic Medium Education in nursery and P1 cannot fully be made until the time of enrolments. Whilst recognising this, there are a few implementation issues on school estates strategy that the council should clarify further in its final report. Reassurances are required on how the council manage funding, resources and any increase in uptake for Gaelic Medium Education. Those residing in the existing catchment area of Newtonmore sought confirmation that education through English would always be available at their local primary, should Gaelic Medium Education enrolments increase. In doing this, the council should consider any plans for house building programmes in the area. They should also confirm how they will use the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 to meet future requests and grow more local provisions by adding Gaelic Medium Education classes to existing provisions, as well as the need for all Gaelic schools.

- 5.4 The educational benefit statement should expand further on the curricular benefits from this proposal. Currently, the proposal paper refers to educational benefits from consolidating existing provisions. It would be helpful to specify how the proposal will help the council meet the targets they have set as statutory in their Gaelic language planning for a 3-18 immersion curriculum.

These duties are specified in the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, 2017.

- 5.5 The council needs to more clearly connect this proposal with the objectives of their Gaelic Language Plan. For this, they should encourage further collaboration between their 3-18 Gaelic Medium specialists, as well as senior leaders who design the curriculum. The council needs to clarify how they have sought the views of children and young people across schools named in this proposal, and the staff at Kingussie High School.
- 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 9

The Council should confirm to parents in Newtonmore that education through English would always be available at their local primary, should Gaelic Medium Education enrolments increase. In doing this, the council should consider any plans for house building programmes in the area. They should also confirm how they will use the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 to meet future requests and grow more local provisions by adding Gaelic Medium Education classes to existing provisions, as well as the need for all Gaelic schools. Reassurances are required on how the council will manage funding, resources and any increase in uptake for Gaelic Medium Education.

Response 9

The Council has already made it clear that we would not refuse places in Newtonmore Primary School to children from the Newtonmore catchment, whether they be attending English medium or Gaelic medium education. English Medium education could only be removed from Newtonmore Primary via a school closure proposal under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, which would have to be ratified by Scottish Ministers. The Council has absolutely no plans to bring forward such a proposal.

The Council already takes planned house building into account when forecasting future rolls, as well as making an allowance for “ad hoc” house building development.

Issue 10

The educational benefit statement should expand further on the curricular benefits from this proposal. Currently, the proposal paper refers to educational benefits from consolidating existing provisions. It would be helpful to specify how the proposal will help the council meet the targets they have set as statutory in their Gaelic language planning for a 3-18 immersion curriculum

Response 10

The Council is clear that the creation of GM catchments is a requirement of the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, and would therefore need to be undertaken irrespective of whether there are demonstrable educational benefits.

However the Proposal does involve promoting the availability of GME to parents in schools that do not offer it. Parents may become aware of the availability of transport for the first time, as well as of the benefits of bilingualism.

The Council's Gaelic Language Plan currently includes a target to "Increase the percentage of the pupil population who are being educated through the medium of Gaelic in primary school to 10%." The target date for this is August 2023.

As of session 2021-22, the proportion of primary school pupils attending GME was 6.44%. The cumulative percentage increase from 2017/18 to 2021/22 in each sector is as follows.

ELC – 13.3% increase
 Primary – 18.4% increase
 Secondary Gàidhlig Fluent – 23.6% increase
 Secondary GME – 6.9% increase
 Secondary GLE – 17.2% increase

The creation of GM catchments will play a part in the Council's overall strategy of promoting GME and increasing the proportion of Highland pupils accessing it.

Issue 11

The council needs to more clearly connect this proposal with the objectives of their Gaelic Language Plan. For this, they should encourage further collaboration between their 3-18 Gaelic Medium specialists, as well as senior leaders who design the curriculum.

Response 11

The Education section of the Council's Gaelic Language Plan sets out the following aims:

- That the Highland Council increases the percentage of pupils in GME from potential enrolment figures at key transition points.
- That the Highland Council increases the percentage of pupils undertaking Gaelic through the Primary Language Learning programme, based on the 1+2 Language Learning Approach and

subsequently through secondary Gaelic Learner Education across The Highland Council area.

- That the Highland Council creates a Gaelic education transitions strategy for retaining children in 0–3/childcare to nursery, nursery to primary, primary to secondary 1, and the Broad General Education to senior phase.
- That the Highland Council develops a curriculum and workforce plan for the delivery of Gaelic education at all levels (0–3, nursery, primary and secondary) including clear signposting to www.teagasg.com and early year's recruitment via The Highland Council's website.
- That the Highland Council undertakes a Highland-wide survey of existing Gaelic education staff to identify career-long professional learning needs, particularly in relation to Gaelic language skills, and develops a programme of training and support.
- That the Highland Council ensures that Gaelic education is considered as part of the school estates capital development whenever possible.

The Proposal will raise the profile of Gaelic in the area and make it clear that the opportunity exists for children in the other primary school catchment to attend GME at Newtonmore Primary School. It will therefore assist with our aim of increasing enrolments, and forms part of our Strategy of providing improved transitions that will help retain children within GME.

During the end of Session 20/21, Highland Council's Strategic Lead for secondary education invited all Secondary Head Teachers with a responsibility for delivery of Gàidhlig education within their curriculum to meet. At this meeting, the changes to the School Improvement Plan to include direct reporting on Gaelic development work for GME was discussed as well as the understanding of the importance of developing the breadth of curriculum available through GME. A further workshop on Gaelic and Gaelic Awareness was then planned, organised by the Empowerment Team and led by the Gaelic Education Support Officer, where all Head Teachers in Highland Council were invited to meet and hear about the aims and outcomes of the HC GLP and Education Scotland's advice on GME and Gaelic Education.

Highland Council has welcomed the recent initiative from Education Scotland for an A9 Corridor Gaelic Secondaries Cross RIC Network involving Kingussie High School, Perth Academy, Breadalbane Academy and Wallace High School, Stirling. The aims of this Network will be:

To facilitate collaboration and partnership between the schools, in particular to strengthen curricular offers.

To encourage sharing of good practice, resources and timetabling

To develop networks for School Leaders and Classroom Teachers

To enable collaborative events for young people in similar sized Gaelic cohorts.

There will be a GLOW group and Education Scotland will facilitate meetings on a termly basis.

Issue 12

The council needs to clarify how they have sought the views of children and young people across schools named in this proposal, and the staff at Kingussie High School.

Response 12

Over the past few years, the Council has created 11 of GM catchments for primary schools offering GME. Generally we have found it difficult to get meaningful feedback from primary age pupils.

The Head Teacher of Newtonmore Primary School met with all the P7s and P4-7 pupils during the week of 19 November to discuss the GM catchment.

She explained to them what a catchment area was, the requirement for every school to have a catchment area, and how the GM catchment area differs to the EM catchment area and why.

She then opened the Proposal up for discussion with children over the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed catchment area.

Advantages identified by the children were that more children would be able to learn Gaelic, and that children would be able to attend from out-with the village.

The disadvantages were to do with the school's accommodation, though this was partly led by the staff. Discussions concerned losing part of the playground if another extension has to be built, over-crowding in the school if additional classes are required, and over-crowding in the playground if there were too many pupils.

Staff within the Gaelic Department of Kingussie High School advise that they were considered they were kept fully informed of the consultation, and the proposal has no real effect on the rest of the school. Staff at the High School do of course have the same opportunity as anyone else to respond to a public consultation exercise.

7.0 Effects on the Community

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

8.0 Effects on School Transport

8.1 Travel arrangements are already in place for journeys to the designated GM 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 Alleged omissions from the Proposal Paper are addressed at Responses 4-8 above. None of the alleged omissions relate to matters specified in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

10.2 Having carefully considered this matter, the Council has concluded that the impact of this alleged inaccuracy does not represent a material consideration relevant to the Authority's decision as to implementation of the proposal. Responses 4-8 above set out the Council's reasons for coming to this conclusion.

11.0 Overall Review of Consultation Exercise

11.1 Only 3 written responses were received, two of which were in support of the Proposal. One person spoke at the public meeting to express concern about the proposal, the same person who also submitted concerns in writing. The issues raised with Education Scotland are recorded above.

11.2 The main concern expressed is around the potential for the capacity of Newtonmore PS to be exceeded, should there be a large influx of pupils from other parts of the ASG seeing GME at Newtonmore Primary School. This issue has been addressed in detail at Responses 4, 5 6, and 8 above.

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 met online with parents, pupils and staff at Newtonmore Primary School, and gathered a range 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 Newtonmore Primary School offers educational benefits and should be implemented.

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.

Nicky Grant

Executive Chief Officer, Education

20 January 2022

CONSULTATION MEETING – GAELIC MEDIUM CATCHMENT AREA FOR NEWTONMORE PRIMARY SCHOOL

HELD ON TEAMS – 31 AUGUST 2021 – 6.30pm

MINUTES OF MEETING

Panel

Cllr. Bill Lobban - Chairperson
Brian Porter, Head of Resources
Ian Jackson, Education Officer, Resources
Fiona Shearer, Area Education Manager
Lena Walker, Gaelic Education Support Officer

In Attendance

Kenny Wright – parent
Alistair McGill – parent
Sandra MacKay – parent
Stuart MacKellaig – parent
Graham Fraser – Newtonmore Community Council
Sarah Fraser – Head Teacher Newtonmore Primary
Marie Robinson – GM Teacher at Newtonmore PS
Cllr. Muriel Cockburn, Highland Council
Cllr. Pippa Hadley, Highland Council
Margaret Mulholland – Gaelic Community Development Officer
Joan Esson, Education Scotland
Magaidh Wentworth, CnamP
Innes MacCuinn, CnamP
Gavin Musgrove, Strathspey and Badenoch Herald

Apologies

Ian Adamson, Head Teacher, Kingussie High School

Chair Bill Lobban introduced himself as Convener of The Highland Council and Chair of the Local Committee. Cllr Lobban then welcomed everyone to the Consultation for Newtonmore Primary School and apologised for the cancellation of the recent meeting. and explained the protocol for Teams meetings.

Cllr Lobban explained to those who haven't participated in a Teams meeting, keep your microphone muted if you aren't actually speaking, as that reduces feedback. You should see a microphone symbol on the bar on the top of your screen, which you can

toggle on and off. Secondly, Teams has a system under which anyone who wants to ask a question or make a point should “raise their hand” to attract the Chair’s attention. You do this by clicking on the hand symbol on the bar at the top of your screen. To keep the meeting manageable asked that anyone who wants to ask a question alerts me by clicking on the “raise your hand” symbol, and by clicking it off once you have finished speaking.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the proposal to formally establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Newtonmore Primary School, as set out in the recommendation to the proposal Paper.

The Proposal has been issued as a result of statutory guidance on Gaelic Education, produced by Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

The Council officials present tonight are Brian Porter, Head of Education Resources; Fiona Shearer, Area Education Manager; Ian Jackson, Education Officer, (Resources); and Lena Walker, Gaelic Development Manager.

Ian Jackson will now describe the consultation process and the detailed reasons for issuing the Proposal.

Mr 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 is part. We are currently in the initial phase of that consultation, which is due to end on Friday 3 September, and I would urge anyone who wants to submit views on writing to do so by that date. The purpose of tonight’s meeting is to gather views, and we will 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 3 September, 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 contact Newtonmore Primary, and they will be keen to hear from 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 prepare a Report reviewing the consultation exercise and present it to the Council’s Education Committee. The Review 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.

Because of the Statutory Guidance we mentioned earlier, the Council has to set up a Gaelic Medium catchment. What is up for debate is its extent of that catchment. The GM catchment we are proposing is the whole of the Kingussie High School catchment. Up to now there has been a “custom and practice” arrangement in respect of any children who wanted to attend Gaelic Medium education from outwith the Newtonmore Primary catchment itself, and at the present time we do have children from the other primary school catchments attending GME at Newtonmore. It’s fair to say that this Proposal is simply formalising arrangements which have already been operating in practice.

At this stage in the evening I wouldn’t normally talk in more detail about the proposal, but I’m aware of press reports of local concern around the school’s capacity, so I’ll make a few comments about that before we later go on to the Q and A session. It’s always difficult to try and predict the future, but as far as we can reasonably look ahead, the Council does not consider there is any significant prospect of the school going over capacity. The number of classes in a primary school depends on the number of children and the HC has a set of bandings to determine this. For example, schools with 20-47 pupils are allocated 2 teachers, those with 48-71 pupils have three teachers, and those with between 72 and 96 children have four teachers. Where a school offers both Gaelic and English medium education, the two streams are treated as separate schools and staffed accordingly. For the current year, the school has 77 children in EM and 33 in GM, which means it has 4 English Medium and 2 GM classes. With 33 children in GM, we are quite a long way from the 48 that would be needed for a third GM class.

The vast majority of the children attending Newtonmore PS are from Newtonmore itself, and therefore any rise in GM pupils will be matched by an equivalent decline in children attending EM. Based on the current nursery numbers, we anticipate that in the next two years the school will operate with 3 EM and 2 GM classes, so one class less than at present.

It is theoretically possible that an unexpected and significant increase in GM pupils coming from other parts of the area could create pressure on the school accommodation. There is no particular reason to suppose that the creation of the GM catchment would create a sudden increase in demand for GME, but if this scenario were to arise, the Council would not refuse places in Newtonmore PS to children from Newtonmore itself (whether for GM or EM). The likely solution to such circumstances would be to create additional GM provision in either Kingussie or Aviemore, thereby reducing pressure on Newtonmore PS.

In summary, the benefit of the Proposal is that we're giving clarity to parents in respect of GME, making clear where entitlement exists and where it doesn't exist, and that's an improvement on the existing arrangements based on custom and practice. There is therefore no current evidence to support the suggestion that Newtonmore Primary is in danger of turning away pupils from its own community, due to accommodation pressures.

The Chairperson invited Lena Walker to speak about the Gaelic educational issues set out in the Proposal Paper.

Mrs Walker advised that Gaelic Medium Education is about bilingualism and that this is about a lot more than two languages. There are 3 main advantages we can speak to, social, linguistic and cognitive. Socially, children have access to two cultures which in turn leads to more tolerance to and more interest in other cultures. Linguistically, they have an earlier awareness of sounds and words with an enhanced language learning ability and this can lead to earlier reading. Cognitively, there are many benefits which are widely published and all 3 advantages are backed by research. Therefore, learning to speak Gaelic is a wonderful opportunity to provide children with the benefits of bilingualism and bilingualism is essential to the survival of Gaelic.

The Statutory Guidance recommends that catchment areas be developed to provide clarity for parents about the entitlement to GME for their children and it is important to note that provision of GME is demand lead by parents.

The Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan is a statutory document, following the requirements of the Gaelic Language Act, where Highland Council makes a clear commitment to increasing Gaelic useage, increasing the number of Gaelic speakers, enhancing the profile of Gaelic and generating a positive image of the language. For that reason, the Highland Council has a strong focus in Gaelic Medium Education.

The Chairperson then explained Mr Porter, Mrs Shearer, Mr Jackson and Mrs Walker were available to answer questions.

Q1 – (Stuart MacKellaig) – The only question I have in respect of this proposal is the decision of Newtonmore as the school of choice for GME. Why was Kingussie not chosen? It has a lower school roll than Newtonmore and has a larger plot to expand into for the future that Newtonmore does not.

A1 (Brian Porter) – This consultation exercise is not about establishing new Gaelic Medium provision, it's about formalising the catchment for the existing provision. The established provision is in Newtonmore and any change to that would have its own consequences. The majority of the pupils who are accessing GME are from within the Newtonmore catchment, and so any change to current arrangements for GME could result in the displacement of those pupils. This is about more than just the physical

environment of the school. The reality is that we have this established provision within Newtonmore and that the majority of the GM pupils reside near the school. This is a process to formalise a catchment, to provide clarity to parents going forward. As indicated earlier, we do not believe the numbers indicate that a capacity impact will arise at Newtonmore Primary. Notwithstanding that, what we will do, is invest and address capacity issues where they do exist, and this would be considered should the situation arise.

A2 (Sarah Fraser) Gaelic Medium has been established at Newtonmore for approximately 30 years, and the reason why it was established in Newtonmore as opposed to Kingussie was due to parental demand in this area, as far as I am led to believe.

Q2 – (Stuart MacKellaig) Given that Newtonmore Primary School on more than one occasion has reached its capacity, and Kingussie Primary hasn't, it is clear, whilst appreciating that the majority of GM pupils are from Newtonmore and that this isn't about GME versus EME, it is essentially about the cuts made from 6 classes to 3 classes for English Medium, and also the potential for the school to have too many pupils. Any way you cut it, introducing pupils from other areas raises the possibility of there being an over-subscribed school.

A3 – (Brian Porter) – Speaking from experience, for context, we have 20 GME primary provisions. Statutory Guidance requires us to create catchments for GME and we have completed 11 to date. In past exercises we have experienced similar legitimate comments and questions that arise, but we haven't seen the situation where the formalisation of the catchment leads to a sudden change on the ground. We haven't seen, in other locations, a significant influx of GME pupils from other locations. Often, as in the case of Newtonmore, the majority of the pupils accessing GME are resident within the school catchment anyway, so if GME were not on offer the pupils would still be attending the school. There is often a fairly limited impact from other schools within the ASG. Ian made the point that from our own modelling, we do not expect that the concerns you express would arise here. Were that to be the case, as unlikely as it may be, we would step up to address the need for additional capacity.

Q3 – (Stuart MacKellaig) – Finally, to finish my point, the Proposal made it clear the Council were looking to reduce the number of classes and move teaching staff accordingly. My question is therefore, once these cuts have been made, it is possible to say to the public in general, that regardless of what movements occur in GME or EME, that no Newtonmore resident will be affected, if a child is sent to Newtonmore. That was the major missing point in the proposal. I find it quite strange that whilst this is such an important point, it has not been included in the Proposal, that no Newtonmore resident will ever be affected by the influx of more children into the school, regardless of whether they choose GME or EME.

A4 – (Bill Lobban) – That commitment was made at the start of the meeting.

A5 – (Ian Jackson) – We are not looking to reduce the number of English medium classes at Newtonmore Primary. There are certain bandings that attract a certain number of teachers and our *forecasts* are that if the current pattern of increases in Gaelic Medium continues, that will lead to a reduction in the number of children attending English Medium, and a fall in the number of English Medium classes from 4 to 3. That's if the forecasts are realised - there is no intention to produce this effect. It is purely a matter of parental choice. In terms of your second point - and I appreciate that you joined the meeting as I was already making my earlier remarks - we didn't include that statement because we didn't see it as an issue. We saw no prospect of that situation arising therefore we saw no need for it to be covered in the paper. As it's been raised as a local concern, which is quite legitimate, I had included in my introductory remarks the commitment that we will not refuse any child from the Newtonmore catchment a place at Newtonmore PS as a result of pupils coming in from elsewhere for GME. If the number of children from Kingussie and Aviemore attending Newtonmore for GME was sufficient to cause a capacity issue for Newtonmore, then the obvious solution would be to look towards introducing additional GME provision for the ASG, for example at Kingussie.

A6 – (Fiona Shearer) – To reiterate what Ian was saying, there is no intention to reduce the number of classes. The predicted fall in the number of the EM classes is simply a reflection of the projected roll. Regardless of GME or EME, children are entitled to go to their catchment school. So, if a child moves into a school mid-session and the classes are full and are set for the year, they would still be guaranteed a place as soon as one becomes available. Across the board, we look at projected and forecasted roles. We review each year based on school roles in February, May and again in August for up to date figures and set classes for each school year. There is no intention to cut or reduce classes for Newtonmore families.

There being no further comments, Bill Lobban thanked everyone for coming. Cllr Lobban reminded everyone that representations should be sent to Ian Jackson, email Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk (address circulated in the letter), or via the online form, to arrive **no later than Friday 3 September 2021**.

Cllr Lobban advised that the record of the meeting will be made available at least 3 weeks before the meeting of the Education Committee where it is intended that the report of the meeting, plus any submissions/representations and the view of Education Scotland on the proposal, will be considered.

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

1. Bòrd na Ghàidhlig
2. Comann nam Pàrant
3. Mr Stuart MacKellaig

Freagairt Bhòrd na Gàidhlig airson Co-chomhairleachadh aig Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd air Sgìre-sgoile airson Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig ann am Baile Ùr an t-Slèibh	Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Response on the Highland Council Consultation on GME Catchment Area for Newtonmore
<p>1. Ro-ràdh</p> <p>Tha Bòrd na Gàidhlig a' cur fàilte air an iomairt gus sgìre-sgoile a chur air bhonn airson Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig (FtG) ann an sgìre Bhaile Ùr an t-Slèibh. Tha am Bòrd ag aithneachadh gu bheil Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd a' gluasad a dh'ionnsaigh sgìrean-sgoile a stèidheachadh airson FtG air feadh sgìre na Comhairle.</p> <p>Tha am Plana Cànan Nàiseanta Gàidhlig 2018-23 agus an Stiùireadh Reachdail airson Foghlam Gàidhlig mar bhunait airson na freagairt seo. San Stiùireadh Reachdail, far a bheil barrachd mìneachaidh air na ceumannan seo, 's e bunait na cùise gum bu chòir adhartas is fàs a thighinn air Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig.</p>	<p>1. Introduction</p> <p>Bòrd na Gàidhlig welcomes the initiative to establish a school catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in the Newtonmore area. The Bòrd recognises that Highland Council is moving to the establishment of catchment areas where there is existing GME provision in the Council's area.</p> <p>The Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education and the National Gaelic Language Plan 2018-23 form the basis for the Bòrd's response to this consultation. The Statutory Guidance, where there is further detail on the steps involved, has as its basis that GME should develop and grow.</p>
<p>2. Fiosrachadh sa Cho-chomhairleachadh</p> <p>Tha Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd ag ràdh gu bheil iad airson sgìre-sgoile a stèidheachadh airson nan adhbharan a leanas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tha an Stiùireadh Reachdail a' moladh gun tèid sin a chur air dòigh; • Tha mì-chinnt ann a thaobh sgìrean-sgoile airson FtG a tha a' ciallachadh nach eil pàrantan cinnteach am faigh iad FtG airson an cuid chloinne; agus • Tha cleachdadh aig a' Chomhairle gum bi iad a' libhrigeadh còmhail taobh a-staigh sgìre a tha reusanta agus gu h-àbhaisteach tha seo a' ciallachadh nas lugha de 15 mìltean airson 'turas gu sgoil'. 	<p>2. Consultation Information</p> <p>The Highland Council says they want to establish a catchment area for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Statutory Guidance recommends that one be developed; • There is lack of clarity for parents about the entitlement to GME for their children; and • The Council has used the practice of providing transport within a reasonable travelling distance and generally this has been understood to mean within 15 miles of the school.

3. Moladh na Comhairle

Tha FtG ri fhaighinn aig ìre na h-Àrd-sgoile ann an Àrd-sgoil Cheann a' Ghiùthsaidh.

Tha 5 bun-sgoiltean anns a' Bhuidhinn Sgoile Co-cheangailte. 'S e Bun-sgoil Bhaile Ùr an t-Slèibh an aon tè dhuibh a tha a' toirt seachad FtG aig ìre na bun-sgoile.

Tha a' Chomhairle a' moladh gun tèid sgìre-sgoil airson FtG a stèidheachadh airson bun-sgoil Bhaile Ùr an t-Slèibh a bhios a' gabhail a-steach nan sgìrean-sgoile uile a th' aig Foghlam tro Mheadhan na Beurla airson bhun-sgoiltean Bhaile Ùr an t-Slèibh, Almhaidh, na h-Aghaidh Mhòr, Gharbh-Ghaisg agus Cheann a' Ghiùthsaidh.

Tha liosta ann den astar agus àm-siubhail eadar gach sgoil agus Bun-sgoil Bhaile Ùr an t-Slèibh aig 6.1.

- Bun-sgoil na h-Aghaidh Mhòr – Bun-sgoil Bhaile Ùr an t-Slèibh - 15.7 mìle, àm-siubhail 26 mionaidean.
- Bun-sgoil Almhaidh – Bun-sgoil Bhaile Ùr an t-Slèibh - 10.2 mìle, àm-siubhail 18 mionaidean.
- Bun-sgoil Cheann a' Ghiùthsaidh – Bun-sgoil Bhaile Ùr an t-Slèibh - 2.8 mìle, àm-siubhail 5 mionaidean.
- Bun-sgoil Gharbh-Ghaisg – Bun-sgoil Bhaile Ùr an t-Slèibh - 8.1 mìle, àm-siubhail 14 mionaidean.

Aig 8.1, tha a' chomhairle ag ràdh nach eil iad an dùil gun toir an sgìre-sgoile buaidh air ullachaidhean còmh-dhail-sgoile.

8.2 Chan eilear an dùil gun toir am Moladh buaidh sam bith air ullachaidhean còmh-dhail làithreach. Thèid clàraidhean ann am FtG bho thaobh a-muigh an astar coiseachd reachdail san àm ri teachd a

3. Council Recommendation

GME is available at Secondary Level at Kingussie High School.

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

The Council recommends that the GM catchment be established for Newtonmore Primary School which will overlay the English Medium catchments of Newtonmore, Alvie Aviemore, Gergask and Kingussie Primaries.

The consultation paper lists the time and distance between each school and Newtonmore Primary School at 6.1

- Aviemore Primary – Newtonmore Primary – 15.7 miles, 26 minutes travel time.
- Alvie Primary – Newtonmore Primary – 10.2 miles, 18 minutes travel time.
- Kingussie Primary – Newtonmore Primary – 2.8 miles, 5 minutes travel time.
- Gergask Primary – Newtonmore Primary – 8.1 miles, 14 minutes travel time

At 8.1, the council states that they do not anticipate the proposed catchment area will impact school transport arrangements:

8.2 The Proposal is not expected to have any effects on current transport arrangements. Future enrolments in GME from outwith the statutory walking distance will be assessed



<p><i>mheasadh san aon dòigh 's a bhithear an-dràsta, le ullachaidhean iomchaidh gan dèanamh.</i></p>	<p><i>in the same way as at present, with appropriate arrangements being made.</i></p>
<p>4. Stiùireadh Reachdail airson Foghlam Gàidhlig</p> <p>Tha an Stiùireadh Reachdail airson Foghlam Gàidhlig a' moladh gun tèid sgìrean-sgoile a stèidheachadh airson sgoiltean far a bheil Foghlam tro Mheadhan na Gàidhlig (FtG) ri fhaighinn (Earrann 2.53 is 2.54).</p> <p>Sgìrean-sgoile FtG is Stiùireadh airson Àiteachan a Ghleidheadh do Sgoilearan</p> <p>Bu chòir do dh'ùghdarrasan foghlaim sgìrean-sgoile a stèidheachadh airson FtG, agus dh'fhaodadh gum bi iad ag iarraidh beachdachadh air an iarrtas a th' ann airson FtG nuair a tha iad a' stèidheachadh stiùireadh airson nan àiteachan a thèid a ghleidheadh do sgoilearan ann am FtG.</p> <p>A rèir 2.54:</p> <p>Bu chòir do sgìre-sgoile airson sgoil le FtG a bhith na sgìre far a bheil an t-ùghdarras foghlaim den bheachd gu bheil e reusanta do chloinn san sgìre sin, a tha airson a dhol gu FtG, siubhal don sgoil, agus bu chòir san sgìre sin gum bi cothrom ann pàrantan a thàladh gu bhith cur an cuid chloinne gu FtG.</p> <p>Mar sin, tha Bòrd na Gàidhlig a' cur fàilte air a' mholadh gun tèid sgìre-sgoile a stèidheachadh airson Bun-sgoil Bhaile Ùr an t-Slèibh far a bheil solar FtG ann. Tha an t-ùghdarras foghlaim air beachdachadh an dà chuid air astar agus ullachaidhean siubhail airson sgoilearan agus pàrantan.</p>	<p>4. Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education</p> <p>The Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education recommends that catchment areas are established for schools where Gaelic-medium education (GME) is provided (Section 2.53 & 2.54).</p> <p>GME Catchment Areas and Placing Guidelines</p> <p>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.</p> <p>2.54 states:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Therefore, Bòrd na Gàidhlig welcomes the recommendation that a catchment area will be established for Newtonmore Primary School where there is GME provision. The education authority has considered both reasonable travel distance and arrangements for pupils and parents.</p>



Gaelic Medium catchment area for Newtonmore Primary School

Comann nam Pàrant welcomes the formalisation of a school catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in the Newtonmore area.

The proposal is in keeping with Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education which recommends that local authorities establish catchments with reasonable travelling distances, and with the potential to attract parents to GME.

The setting of a catchment area will provide clarification for parents on their entitlement to GME, and although this is not the equivalent of having provision in each locality, we hope it will encourage more families to consider GME.

Although we agree with the setting of the catchment, should parents in the catchments of any of the other associated schools submit a request in the future for GME in line with the Education Act (Scotland) 2016, we trust that Highland Council will follow the process for requests as set out in Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education.

The proposal includes a formalisation of GM secondary provision in Kingussie High School. We welcome this and hope this will bring an expansion of GM secondary teaching within the High School with more opportunities for GM pupils to continue their Gaelic medium education through to the senior phase.

We also welcome the extension to the nursery at Newtonmore Primary and hope this will mean delivery of 1140 hours in Gaelic which has the potential to attract more families to GME.

M. Wentworth
2 Sultain 2021

The Highland Council Education Committee - Proposal to establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Newtonmore Primary School

Public Response: Stuart MacKellaig, Police House, Church Terrace, Newtonmore, PH20 1DT.

Introduction

I am writing this response as both a parent of a Newtonmore Primary School (NPS) pupil and as a member of the Newtonmore and Vicinity Community Council (NVCC). The basis of the following response follows the Gaelic Medium Education (GME) proposal relayed from Highland Council (HC) Business unit on June 2nd. I am a supporter of GME – and believe that this is a positive policy of the Scottish Executive, and understand the benefits both for the local community and for the area of Badenoch and Strathspey.

The basis of this response also follows discussion of the GME proposal at two of the most recent monthly meetings of the NVCC, the HC public consultation meeting – held online – on August 31st and at the most recent NPS Parent Council meeting on September 7th. I have also discussed this matter at length HC Education Officer, Ian Jackson and elected member, Highland Councillor, Muriel Cockburn.

GME Proposal

When the initial proposal was first published, a number of assumptions and sweeping statements were made within the proposal without significant explanation. Whether this was intentional or otherwise, it certainly was provocative.

In 6.6 of the GME proposal document, phrases such as:

“In the next few years the Council expects to see a rise in the number of pupils opting for GME and a fall in the numbers for English Medium. Eventually we expect this to result in the school have 3 classes in GME and 3 in English Medium education.”

Now I understand that when making projections made on historical data, there can be a certain degree of error, and this has been the case here as Ian Jackson has subsequently confirmed that English Medium Education (EME) or GME provision for this forthcoming year, at present, will not see a reduction or increase in the present number of classes. The methodology concerning these historical statistics are a matter of public record, and Ian Jackson was later able to provide a link to the HC website providing an explanation of how those statistics were derived and the associated projections. Why were these links not provided in the initial document? Why were the pupil to class ratios also not provided to demonstrate that the number of classes, whether EME or GME were dictated by decisions made by elected members and not HC officials?

In 9.2 of the GME proposal document, the policy regarding the re-deployment of staff is discussed. Again, it refers to the assumptions made in 6.6. showing a potential loss of EME provision.

Mr Jackson states that recently available figures have brought clarity to the numbers anticipated to join NPS - and this to a degree explains some of the changes to predictions made in the proposal. However, a fundamental aspect was omitted from the original document - and this was my main reason for questioning the proposal. There is a fear that by bringing in pupils in from outwith the Newtonmore catchment area (regardless of the reason, GME or otherwise) whilst the school roll is lower than previous years, that there will be no space for future pupils from Newtonmore should numbers rise. This is reinforced by Ian Jackson:

"The main effect of creating the GM catchment is to clarify the entitlement to GME for parents living in the other school catchments in the ASG. Whilst it is possible that some more pupils from other catchments could seek to attend GME at Newtonmore as a result of this proposal, that clearly does not affect the numbers enrolling in EME from Newtonmore itself."

It is unknown how many pupils are likely to request GME provision from outwith the Newtonmore catchment area following the introduction of this initiative, however Ian Jackson has made the following assurance:

"What I can say is that we will not send pupils from Newtonmore to other schools to accommodate GM pupils from outwith Newtonmore."

Now, given this is quite an obvious concern for local residents/parents - and given HC has had experience of rolling out the GME initiative in many other areas of Highland, it seems strange that this was not included as a key statement within the original proposal. Ian Jackson in response states:

"We didn't include that statement because we didn't see it as an issue. We saw no prospect of that situation arising therefore we saw no need for it to be covered in the paper."

How can Ian Jackson make that assertion? However, now that this 'assurance' has now been made, it should on the surface give comfort to those concerns. However, there is no clarity regarding what contingencies have been planned to address this situation should it arise. Whilst options have been discussed, they are not a foregone conclusion. Should Newtonmore Primary School become oversubscribed, Ian Jackson has made clear:

"It is very difficult for officials in Highland to make binding statements about hypothetical future scenarios, since ultimately such decisions will involve elected members. As I'm sure you know a new Council is due to be elected in May 2022. As Brian Porter highlighted at the meeting, we have already created 11 GM catchments in Highland, and we are not aware that any have produced a flood of GM pupils coming in from other areas. In the unlikely event of this happening, the solution of additional provision within the ASG seems the obvious one, but the matter would need to be considered in detail at the time."

This tends to suggest that there is no plan. Meanwhile, new pupils could potentially be displaced to seek primary education elsewhere should there be an influx of pupils regardless of whether they opt for GME or EME.

Conclusion

I would wish the committee to consider the following:

1. I raised the point at the public consultation meeting, why Kingussie Primary School had not seriously been considered as a suitable base for primary GME learning? The school role has historically been lower than that of Newtonmore Primary School. The physical site of Kingussie Primary School is larger and able to expand to cater for future demand. The proximity of Kingussie High School's already established secondary GME provision to Kingussie Primary School is close. If pupils are to be transported to a school then the proximity of Kingussie to Newtonmore is in real terms negligible and will not greatly impact those pupils already being transported. Appendix B of the GME proposal quite clearly demonstrates this fact. Again, this would ensure sustainability in the long term rather than looking for additional provision elsewhere.

2. If Newtonmore Primary School is to be used as the base for GME primary education, then sustainability and physical capacity is the main concern. Ian Jackson's informal suggestion to provide additional provision at alternative neighbouring schools seems to concede that Newtonmore Primary School lacks the physical space to extend further. Whereas Kingussie Primary School does. I am also concerned that this contingency was not contained within the original proposal document and needs to be included following any policy decision and ratified at member level should Newtonmore Primary School be chosen as the ASG centre for GME primary education.

In short, the initial proposal document has been flawed from the outset. The proposal has omitted crucial and important facts. With public meetings held on-line, through no fault of HC – but due to COVID-19 restrictions, it has prevented full and effective public consultation on the matter. Whilst I am grateful to Ian Jackson for allowing the above document to be submitted beyond the deadline (September 3rd), as a member of the public, I should not have had to continually probe to fully discover the true implications of this proposal. Indeed it was echoed at the Parent Council that the proposal had changed since its original publication. The lack of clarity and disclosure has led to friction within the community – where some have suggested there is a struggle for resources between EME and GME provision. Some have even suggested that this has something to do with the Head Teacher being a Gaelic speaker. This is indeed not the case.

I made clear from the outset, I am in full support of GME provision. I have been to the Lochaber GME primary school in Caol (Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Aba), which is a fantastic facility. I wish there was the same opportunity in this area. I am only concerned that given the limited facilities available in Newtonmore – trying to 'fit a quart into a pint pot' is not a sustainable solution.

Stuart MacKellaig

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 Newtonmore Primary School and Kingussie High School.

September 2021

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 Newtonmore Primary School and Kingussie High School. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision.

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:

- attendance at the virtual public meeting held on 31 August 2021 in connection with the council's proposals;
- 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; and
- discussions 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 31 May 2021 to 3 September 2021. The proposal paper was distributed to staff, Parent Councils and parents of pupils attending the primary schools detailed 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 and staff at Kingussie High School.

2.3 The council hosted a virtual public meeting at which officers set a rationale for the proposals, discussed high-level educational benefits and invited attendee views. There were 14 in

attendance at the virtual public meeting. Less than a few attendees raised questions on the use of intelligence underpinning the proposal. They also raised a query on the proposal's impact on pupils' capacity to attend English Medium at Newtonmore Primary School should the proposal, if agreed, result in an increase in pupil numbers attending Gaelic Medium Education. Overall, they requested more transparency and clarity on a few aspects of the proposal. Three written responses were received, one of 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 provision. They welcomed that a catchment area was being set for Gaelic Medium Education and did not identify any concerns. Comann nam Pàrant welcomed that the proposal enacted legislation. They highlighted that further clarity was required on how the council would respond to future expansion and parental requests within local areas. They also raised issues around the benefits of the proposal to the curriculum and children's learning. In particular, they referenced total immersion as part of the expansion to 1140 hours in early learning and childcare. Additionally, the availability of a meaningful proportion of the secondary curriculum through the medium of Gaelic.

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 catchment areas for Gaelic Medium Education at Newtonmore Primary School and Kingussie High School. These will overlay the catchment areas of all primary schools associated with Kingussie High School, depending on the results of the consultation. Almost all the pupils currently attending Gaelic Medium Education at Newtonmore Primary School are from within the school's catchment area for English Medium. This proposal assists the council in clarifying parents' entitlement and admission arrangements to Gaelic Medium Education, whilst 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. All consultees valued that Gaelic Medium Education was an option available to parents. From year to year, enrolments in early learning and childcare and P1 determine pupils' uptake for Gaelic Medium Education. Projecting and confirming the uptake for Gaelic Medium Education in nursery and P1 cannot fully be made until the time of enrolments. Whilst recognising this, there are a few implementation issues on school estates strategy that the council should clarify further in its final report. Reassurances are required on how the council manage funding, resources and any increase in uptake for Gaelic Medium Education. Those residing in the existing catchment area of Newtonmore sought confirmation that education through English would always be available at their local primary, should Gaelic Medium Education enrolments increase. In doing this, the council should consider any plans for house building programmes in the area. They should also confirm how they will use the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 to meet future requests and grow more local provisions by adding Gaelic Medium Education classes to existing provisions, as well as the need for all Gaelic schools.

3.3 The educational benefit statement should expand further on the curricular benefits from this proposal. Currently, the proposal paper refers to educational benefits as helping to "consolidate" existing provisions. It would be helpful to specify how the proposal will help the council meet the targets they have set as statutory in their Gaelic language planning for a 3-18 immersion curriculum. These duties are specified in the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, 2017.

4. Summary

Overall, the council's proposal is of educational benefit to children and parents who reside within the catchment areas for Kingussie High School. The proposal gives clarity to parents on how to access Gaelic Medium Education. The council should define further how an increased uptake for English and/or Gaelic Medium Education will be met in an equitable manner. The council needs to more clearly connect this proposal with the objectives of their Gaelic Language Plan. For this, they should encourage further collaboration between their 3-18 Gaelic Medium specialists, as well as senior leaders who design the curriculum. The council needs to clarify how they have sought the views of children and young people across schools named in this proposal, and the staff at Kingussie High School.

**HM Inspectors
September 2021**

Achd Sgoiltean (Co-chomhairleachadh) (Alba) 2010

Aithisg le Foghlam Alba a' dèiligeadh ri taobhan foghlaim den mholadh le Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd gus sgìre-frithealaidh a stèidheachadh airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig aig Bun-sgoil Bhaile Ùr an t-Slèibh agus Àrd-sgoil Cheann a' Ghiùthsaidh.

Sultain 2021

1. Ro-ràdh

1.1 Chaidh an aithisg seo bho Foghlam Alba ullachadh le Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh airson Foghlam (Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh) a rèir cùmhnantan [Achd Sgoiltean \(Co-chomhairleachadh\) \(Alba\) 2010](#) (“Achd 2010”). Is e adhbhar na h-aithisg beachd neo-eisimeileach agus chothromach a thoirt air moladh Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd gus sgìre-frithealaidh a stèidheachadh airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig aig Bun-sgoil Bhaile Ùr an t-Slèibh agus Àrd-sgoil Cheann a’ Ghiùthsaidh. Tha Earrann 2 den aithisg a’ cur an cèill cunntas goirid mun phròiseas co-chomhairleachaidh. Tha Earrann 3 den aithisg a’ cur an cèill beachd Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh air taobhan foghlaim a’ mholaidh, a’ gabhail a-steach beachdan cudromach a chaidh a chur an cèill le luchd-co-chomhairleachaidh. Tha Earrann 4 a’ toirt geàrr-chunntas air beachdan an Luchd-sgrùdaidh san fharsaingeachd air a’ mholadh. An dèidh an aithisg seo fhaotainn, tha an Achd a’ cur riatanas air a’ chomhairle beachdachadh air agus an uair sin an aithisg co-chomhairleachaidh dheireannach ullachadh. Bu chòir dhan aithisg co-chomhairleachaidh dheireannach an aithisg seo a ghabhail a-steach agus feumaidh e mìneachadh ciamar, ann a bhith a’ tighinn gu co-dhùnadh mun mholadh, a rinneadh ath-bhreithneachadh air a’ chiad mholadh, a’ gabhail a-steach geàrr-iomradh de na puingeann a chaidh a thogail tron phròiseas co-chomhairleachaidh agus an fhreagairt a thug a’ chomhairle dhaibh. Feumaidh a’ chomhairle an aithisg co-chomhairleachaidh dheireannach fhoillseachadh trì seachdainean mus ruig e a cho-dhùnadh dheireannach.

1.2 Bheachdaich Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh air:

- na buaidhean a dh’fhaodadh a bhith aig a’ mholadh air clann agus daoine òga sna sgoiltean, no air luchd-cleachdaidh sam bith eile; air clann a dh’fhaodadh a bhith nan sgoilearan taobh a-staigh dà bhliadhna bho cheann-là foillseachaidh a’ phàipear molaidh; agus air clann agus daoine òga sam bith eile ann an sgìre na comhairle;
- buaidhean sam bith eile a dh’fhaodadh a bhith aig a’ mholadh;
- mar a tha a’ chomhairle an dùil lùghdachadh no seachnadh droch bhuidhean a dh’fhaodadh èirigh bhon mholadh; agus
- buannachdan foghlaim a tha a’ chomhairle a’ meas a thig bho bhith a’ cur a’ mholaidh an sàs, agus na h-adhbharan a tha aig a’ chomhairle a bhith a’ tighinn gu na beachdan sin.

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

- a bhith an làthair aig a’ choinneimh phoblaich bhiortail a chaidh a chumail air 31 Lùnastal 2021 mu mholaidhean na comhairle;
- beachdachadh air pàipearan-sgrìobhte iomchaidh sam bith a chaidh a thabhann leis a’ chomhairle mun mholadh, gu sònraichte an aithris mu na buannachdan a thaobh foghlam agus na pàipearan co-chomhairleachaidh co-cheangailte, tagraidhean sgrìobhte agus air an labhairt le pàrantan agus daoine eile; agus
- conaltraidhean le luchd-co-chomhairleachaidh iomchaidh.

2. Am pròiseas co-chomhairleachaidh

2.1 Ghabh Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd os làimh an co-chomhairleachadh air a mholadh(-aidhean) a thaobh [Achd Sgoiltean \(Co-chomhairleachadh\) \(Alba\) 2010](#).

2.2 Bha an co-chomhairleachadh foirmeil a' dol bho 31 Cèitean 2021 gu 3 Sultain 2021. Chaidh am pàipear molaidh a thoirt do luchd-obrach, Comhairlean Phàrant agus pàrantan chloinne a bha a' frithealadh nam bun-sgoiltean a bha air an ainmeachadh sa phàipear molaidh. 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 sna pàipearan ionadail. Bha fiosrachadh ri fhaotainn air làrach-lìn na comhairle agus air na meadhanan sòisealta. San aithisg dheireannaich bu chòir dhan chomhairle comharrachadh mar a rinn iad co-chomhairleachadh le clann agus daoine òga agus luchd-obrach aig Àrd-sgoil Cheann a' Ghiùthsaidh.

2.3 Chùm a' chomhairle coinneamh phoblach bhiorail far an robh oifigearan a' cur an cèill na feallsanachd airson nam molaidhean, a' conaltradh mu na buannachdan foghlaim àrd-ìre agus far an tug iad cothrom do luchd-frithealaidh am beachdan a thoirt seachad. Bha 14 an làthair aig a' choinneimh phoblach bhiorail. Cha do thog ach glè bheag de na bha an làthair ceistean mun fhiosrachadh air an robh am moladh stèidhichte. Thog iad ceist cuideachd mu bhuaidh a' mholaidh air comas nan sgoilear a bhith a' frithealadh Foghlam Meadhan Beurla aig Bun-sgoil Bhaile Ùr an t-Slèibh nam biodh am moladh, nan deigheadh aontachadh ris, ag adhbharachadh meudachadh san àireimh de chlann a bha a' frithealadh Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig. San fharsaingeachd, bha iad a' sireadh tuilleadh soilleireachd agus lèirsinneachd air beagan thaobhan den mholadh. Chaidh trì freagairtean sgrìobhte fhaighinn, agus bha aon dhiubh a' togail chùisean a bha coltach ris an fheadhainn a chaidh a thogail aig a' choinneimh phoblach. Tha Bòrd na Gàidhlig mar chonaltraich reachdail airson atharrachaidhean do dh'ullachaidhean airson solar Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig. Chuir iad fàilte air an naidheachd gun robh sgìre-frithealaidh gu bhith air a stèidheachadh airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig agus cha do chomharraich iad draghan sam bith. Chuir Comann nam Pàrant fàilte air an naidheachd gun robh am moladh ag achdachadh reachdas. Chomharraich iad gun robh tuilleadh soillearachd a dhith mun dòigh anns am freagradh a' chomhairle ri leudachadh san àm ri teachd agus iartasan bho phàrantan san sgìre ionadail. Thog iad cuideachd cùisean mu bhuannachdan a' mholaidh a thaobh a' churraicealaim agus ionnsachadh na cloinne. Gu sònraichte, thug iad iomradh air làn bhogadh mar phàirt den leudachadh gu 1140 uair a thìde ann an tràth-ionnsachadh agus cùram-chloinne. A thuilleadh air sin, an cothrom air co-roinn brìoghmhor de churraicealam na h-àrd-sgoile tro mheadhan Gàidhlig.

3. Taobhan foghlaim a' mholaidh

3.1 Tha am moladh seo a' comharrachadh dealas leantainneach Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd a thaobh a bhith a' cur an sàs an Stiùireadh Reachdail air Foghlam Gàidhlig 2017. Tha a' chomhairle a' moladh sgìrean-frithealaidh airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig aig Bun-sgoil Bhaile Ùr an t-Slèibh agus Àrd-sgoil Cheann a' Ghiùthsaidh. Gabhaidh sin a-steach sgìrean-frithealaidh nam bun-sgoiltean air fad a tha co-cheangailte ri Àrd-sgoil Cheann a' Ghiùthsaidh, a rèir toraidhean a' cho-chomhairleachaidh. Cha mhòr nach eil na sgoilearan air fad a tha a' frithealadh Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig aig Bun-sgoil Bhaile Ùr an t-Slèibh bho sgìre-frithealaidh na sgoile airson Foghlam Meadhan Beurla. Tha am moladh seo a' cuideachadh na sgoile ann a bhith a' soilleireachadh còir phàrantan agus ullachaidhean a thaobh cothrom air Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig, agus aig an aon àm a' coileanadh a dhleistanais a bhith a' tabhann an luach as fheàrr.

3.2 Cha mhòr nach robh an luchd-co-chomhairleachaidh air fad a' toirt taic don chomhairle ann a bhith a' stèidheachadh sgìrean-frithealaidh airson Foghlam tro Mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Tha beagan chùisean agus draghan a tha ag èirigh on cho-chomhairleachadh a tha airidh air tuilleadh beachdachaidh. Chuir an luchd-co-chomhairleachaidh luach air a' chothrom Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig a bhith mar roghainn do phàrantan. Bho bhliadhna gu bliadhna, tha clàraidhean ann an tràth-ionnsachadh agus cùram-chloinne agus P1 a' dearbhadh nan àireamhan airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig. Chan urrainnear ro-mheasadh no dearbhadh cinnteach a dhèanamh air

Foghlam Mheadhan Gàidhlig anns an sgoil-àraich no P1 gu àm clàraidh. Ged a thathar ag aithneachadh sin, tha beagan chùisean le bhith a' toirt seo gu buil a thaobh ro-innleachd oighreachd sgoile air am bu chòir dhan chomhairle tuilleadh soilleireachaidh a dhèanamh san aithisg dheireannaich. Feumar ath-mhisneachadh mun dòigh san dèilig a' chomhairle ri maoinachadh, stòrasan agus meudachadh sam bith ann an iarrtas airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig. Tha an fheadhainn a tha a' còmhnaidh anns an sgìre-frithealaidh a tha aig Baile Ùr an t-Slèibh an-dràsta a' sireadh daingneachadh gum bi foghlam meadhan Beurla ri fhaotainn an-còmhnaidh sa bhun-sgoil ionadail aca, nan tigeadh meudachadh air clàraidhean Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig. Ann a bhith a' dèanamh seo, bu chòir dhan chomhairle beachdachadh air planaichean airson prògraman togail thaighean san sgìre. Bu chòir dhaibh cuideachd dearbhadh mar a chleachdas iad Achd Foghlam (Alba) 2016 gus coinneachadh ri iarrtasan san àm ri teachd agus coinneachadh ri tuilleadh solair ionadail a chur ris le bhith a' cur clasaichean Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig ris an t-solar a tha ann a cheana, cho math ris an fheum airson sgoiltean Gàidhlig.

3.3 Bu chòir dhan abairt mu bhuannachd foghlaim tuilleadh leudachaidh a dhèanamh air na buannachdan curraicealaim a tha an lùib a' mholaidh seo. Aig an àm seo, tha am pàipear molaidh a' toirt iomradh air na buannachdan foghlaim mar cuideachadh a bhith "a' daingneachadh" solar a tha ann a-cheana. Bhiodh e feumail comharrachadh mar a chuidicheadh am moladh a' chomhairle coinneachadh ris na h-amasan a mheas iad reachdail nam planadh Gàidhlig airson curraicealam bogaidh 3-18. Tha na dleastanasan sin air an comharrachadh san Stiùireadh Reachdail air Foghlam Gàidhlig, 2017.

4. Geàrr-iomradh

San fharsaingeachd, tha moladh na comhairle na bhuannachd foghlaim do chlann agus pàrantan a tha a' fuireach taobh a-staigh sgìrean-frithealaidh Àrd-sgoil Cheann a' Ghiùthsaidh. Tha am moladh a' toirt soilleireachd do phàrantan mu mar a gheibh iad cothrom air Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig. Bu chòir dhan chomhairle tuilleadh mìneachaidh a dhèanamh air mar a dhèiligeas iad ri meudachadh ann an ìre iarrtais airson Beurla agus/no Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig air a dhèiligeadh ris ann an dòigh chothromach. Feumaidh a' chomhairle am moladh seo a cheangal nas soilleir ri amasan a' Phlana Ghàidhlig. Airson seo, bu chòir dhaibh tuilleadh co-obrachaidh a bhrosnachadh eadar an eòlaichean Foghlaim Meadhan Gàidhlig 3-18, cho math ris na h-àrd-stiùirichean a tha a' deilbh a' churraicealaim. Feumaidh a' chomhairle soilleireachadh mar a tha iad air a bhith a' sireadh beachdan na cloinne agus nan daoine òga sna sgoiltean a tha air an ainmeachadh sa mholadh seo agus an luchd-obrach ann an Àrd-sgoil Cheann a' Ghiùthsaidh.

Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh Sultain 2021

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The proposal is to establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Newtonmore 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 Newtonmore Primary School. The new catchment will overlay the current English Medium (EM) catchments of Newtonmore Primary School, Alvie Primary School, Aviemore Primary School, Gergask Primary School, and Kingussie Primary School.
- To formalise the current arrangements relating to Gàidhlig Medium Education (GME) in Kingussie High School, under which the catchment area for Kingussie High School will apply to both Gàidhlig Medium and English Medium education.

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

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

If implemented as drafted, the proposed GM catchment for Newtonmore Primary School will include all of the primary school catchments within the Kingussie ASG.

Any future parental demand for local provision of GME from within the Alvie, Aviemore, Gergask, and Kingussie school catchments would be assessed in accordance with the Education (Scotland) Act 2016.

SUMMARY OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Proposal Paper Published

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

- Newtonmore Primary School
- Kingussie Primary School
- Alvie Primary School
- Aviemore Primary School
- Gergask Primary School
- Badenoch Public Library, Kingussie
- Aviemore 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 (Education)
Highland Council Headquarters
Glenurquhart Road
Inverness
IV3 5NX
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 (Education), Highland Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX
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 Newtonmore Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (ii) Parents of pupils attending Kingussie Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (iii) Parents of pupils attending Alvie Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (iv) Parents of pupils attending Aviemore Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (v) Parents of pupils attending Gergask 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 *Badenoch and Strathspey Herald* and on the Highland Council's Facebook page.

Consultation Period

The consultation for this Proposal will run from 31 May 2021 and will end on 3 September 2021. 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:

Newtonmore Primary School, 24 August 2021 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 Education 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:

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

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

www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

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

Those sending in a response, whether by letter or electronically should know that their response will be open to public scrutiny and may have to be supplied to anyone making a reasonable request to see it. If they do not wish their response to be made publicly available, they should clearly write on the document: “I wish my response to be considered as confidential with access restricted to Councillors and Council Officers of Highland Council”. Otherwise, it will be assumed that the person making the response agrees to it being made publicly available. All written responses must be received by the last day of the consultation period, 3 September 2021 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 20 September 2021, 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 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 8 October 2021. 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 the Council’s Education Committee, who will make a recommendation to the full Highland Council.

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

At the present time the Council intends to publish its Report in November 2021, prior to submission to the Council’s Education Committee early in 2022. However, this

timescale may change depending on the nature of issues raised during consultation, and the need to give full consideration to those issues. In the latter event, the Report may not be submitted until a later Committee meeting.

Any proposal approved by the Education Committee would require to be confirmed by a subsequent meeting of the full Highland Council.

Note on Corrections

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

PROPOSAL

Legislative Background

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

Reason for the Proposal

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

Informal Consultation

- 3.1 Informal discussions have been held with local elected councillors of Highland Council and with the Head Teachers of Newtonmore Primary School, Kingussie Primary School; Alvie Primary School; Aviemore Primary School and Gergask Primary School. The Parent Councils all of the local primary schools, and all of the local Community Councils, were also notified.

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

- 4.1 At secondary school level, Kingussie High School offers GME.
- 4.2 There are 5 primary schools within the ASG. Newtonmore Primary is the only one to offer GME at the primary stage.

Newtonmore Primary School

- 5.1 Newtonmore Primary is situated within the village of the same name. Its catchment area extends north-eastwards to Ballachroan. To the south the catchment encompasses Dalwhinnie and extends to the boundary between Highland Council and Perth and Kinross Council. The school has a current roll of 103 in P1-7. There are currently 6 classes - 4 English Medium and two Gàidhlig Medium, as well as English Medium and Gàidhlig Medium nursery classes. The outdoor accommodation comprises a tarred and paved play area, an enclosed grass playing area to the rear, and a seated area for outdoor classroom activities. The school hall offers a multi-purpose area for the school and community.
- 5.2 Currently there are 30 pupils accessing GME in the P1-7 stages, all but 5 of whom are from the Newtonmore PS catchment. There are currently 13 pupils within the GM nursery, 6 of whom are from outwith Newtonmore.

Proposed School Catchments for GME

- 6.1 Approximate travel distances and times to Newtonmore Primary from the other schools in the ASG are set out below:
- Aviemore Primary – Newtonmore Primary – 15.7 miles, 26 minutes travel time.
- Alvie Primary – Newtonmore Primary – 10.2 miles, 18 minutes travel time.
- Kingussie Primary – Newtonmore Primary – 2.8 miles, 5 minutes travel time.
- Gergask Primary – Newtonmore Primary – 8.1 miles, 14 minutes travel time
- 6.2 Gergask Primary does have an extensive catchment area, extending as far as the western end of Loch Laggan, approximately 21 miles/32 minutes' drive from Newtonmore. Although this area would normally be considered beyond the normal distance for transport to GME, it would be unrealistic to split the Gergask

catchment in two for the purposes of GME, and in any case all enrolment in GME is voluntary.

- 6.3 The Council believes that Gàidhlig Medium Education should be accessible as many Highland pupils as possible, provided it is practical and reasonable to provide access.
- 6.4 The Council therefore proposes that the GM catchment for Newtonmore Primary will overlay the English Medium catchments of Newtonmore, Alvie Aviemore, Gergask and Kingussie Primaries,
- 6.5 Currently Newtonmore PS has 6 classrooms plus a nursery room, all of which are being utilised (see paragraph 5.1 above). At present the single nursery room is used for both the EM and GM nurseries. An extension is being constructed, which will allow the two nurseries to operate separately.
- 6.6 Current overall projections for the school suggest a small drop in the roll over the next few years, followed by a rising roll from 2025-26 onwards. In the next few years the Council expects to see a rise in the number of pupils opting for GME and a fall in the numbers for English Medium. Eventually we expect this to result in the school have 3 classes in GME and 3 in English Medium education.
- 6.7 The map at **Appendix B** shows the current school catchments for the Newtonmore ASG (outlined in red). The new GM catchment will encompass all 5 primary school catchments.
- 6.8 No changes are proposed for these catchments in respect of English Medium education.
- 6.9 For the purposes of GME, the Kingussie High School catchment will be the same as the school's existing catchment.

Educational Benefits

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

Effects on School Transport

- 8.1 Currently 5 children from outwith the Newtonmore PS catchment use school transport to access GME at Newtonmore Primary School.
- 8.2 The Proposal is not expected to have any effects on current transport arrangements. Future enrolments in GME from outwith the statutory walking distance will be assessed in the same way as at present, with appropriate arrangements being made.

Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements

- 9.1 The proposed GM catchment reflects existing practice that has developed on an informal basis. The Council does not expect any significant impact on local school rolls in the short term.
- 9.2 As indicated at paragraph 6.6 above, it is possible that in the next few years the school will move to having 3 GM and 3 EM classrooms. Any staff changes arising from changing patterns of enrolment will be handled via the Council's standard redeployment policies.

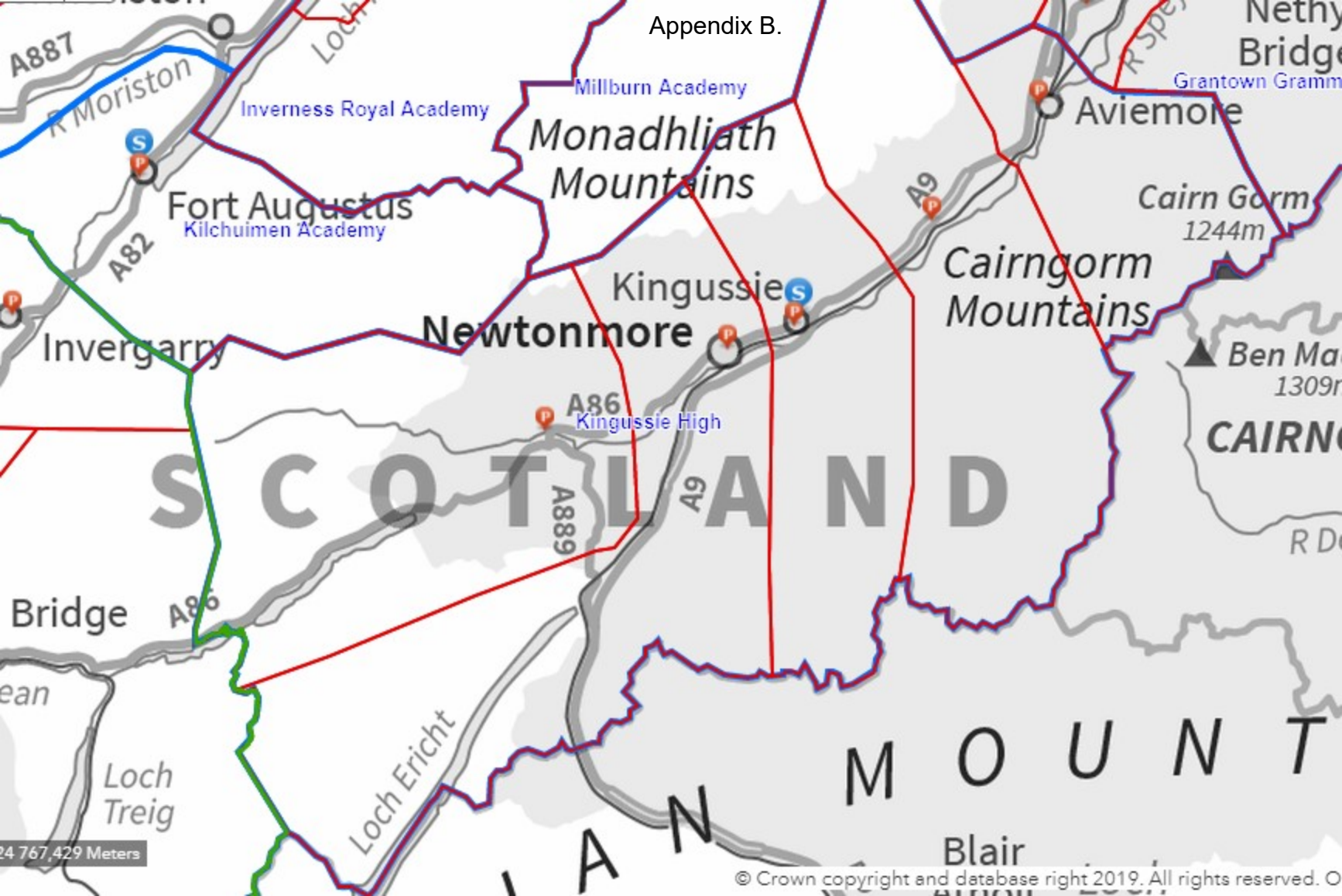
Effect on the Local Communities

- 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 Newtonmore 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 Education Committee of the Highland Council.

END OF PROPOSAL PAPER



Appendix B.

A887

R Moriston

Loch

Inverness Royal Academy

Millburn Academy

Monadhliath Mountains

Grantown Gram

Aviemore

Fort Augustus
Kilchuimen Academy

Cairn Gorm
1244m

Cairngorm Mountains

Kingussie

Newtonmore

Ben Ma
1309m

CAIRNGORM

SCOTLAND

A86
Kingussie High

A9

A889

Bridge

A86

ean

Loch Treig

Loch Ericht

LIAN MOUNTAINS

Blair

24 767,429 Meters