

Agenda Item	13.
Report No	EDU/8/22

## 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 Acharacle 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 Acharacle 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). Acharacle Primary School is the only primary school within the Ardnamurchan School Group (ASG) to offer GME. It is proposed to formally create a GM catchment that overlays the current English Medium catchments of Acharacle Primary School, Kilchoan Primary School, Strontian Primary School, and Ardgour Primary School. The proposed catchment area is larger than that originally proposed in consultation, and takes account of comments received

### 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-3xiii); and the report from Education Scotland (Appendices 4 and 5);
  - iii. agree to recommend to the Council that it creates a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Acharacle Primary School on the basis set out at Paragraph 1.2 above.

### **3. Implications**

- 3.1 Resource - Within the Acharacle, Strontian and Kilchoan catchments, it is intended to use the existing transport to Acharacle Primary School to meet any additional transport requirements arising from the new GM catchment. Currently there is no demand for transport from Ardgour, and therefore no additional costs are expected to arise.
- 3.2 Legal - The statutory consultation has been taken forward as per the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – None.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – None.
- 3.5 Risk - Failure to create a GM catchment would mean non-compliance with the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education.
- 3.6 Gaelic - The Proposal will provide clarity to local parents, in respect of entitlement to GME.

### **4. Overview**

- 4.1 **Appendix 1** is the proposal for decision. The original proposal issued for consultation, and relevant documents for consideration by the Committee, are all also circulated as appendices to this Paper. They provide details of all consultation comments received, the note of the public meeting, the report from Education Scotland, and the Council's response to comments arising from the consultation.
- 4.2 The proposal was widely circulated to parents, pupils and others. There were 12 written responses received during the consultation period, although several of these reported the views of school pupils. A further one response was received after the end of the consultation period. Four responses were on behalf of organisations - Comann nam Pàrant, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Ardgour Community Council and Ardgour Primary School Parent Council. These are addressed in the "Responses" section of Appendix 1 (see pages 4-11). 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 agreed that the proposal has potential to result in educational benefits. They recommend the Council take action over a few aspects of the proposal to ensure that all learners progressing to Ardnamurchan High School have equity and equality in how they access learning of and through Gaelic. These recommendations are addressed at Responses 9-13 of Appendix 1 (pages 12-17).

### **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 received will be tabled or the attention of 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

Date: 10 February 2022

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## **HIGHLAND COUNCIL**

### **EDUCATION AND LEARNING SERVICE**

#### **REVIEW OF THE PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A GAELIC MEDIUM CATCHMENT AREA FOR ACHARACLE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

This report has been prepared following a review of the proposal to establish a Gaelic Medium (GM) catchment area for Acharacle 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 29 September 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.

Following consideration of the responses received during consultation, the Council is proposing changes to the original Proposal. The detailed changes are set out at Response 5, and Section 13, below.

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**Appendix 3** - List of Respondents to Statutory Consultation

**Appendix 3i-3xiii** – Copies of individual responses

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

**Appendix 5** - Report from Education Scotland (Gàidhlig language version)

**Appendix A** - The proposal document

**Appendix B** - Proposed GM catchment for Acharacle Primary School

### **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 Acharacle Primary School.
- 1.2 The Proposal Paper suggested that the new catchment will overlay the current English Medium (EM) catchments of Acharacle Primary School, Kilchoan Primary School, and Strontian Primary School. Two other catchment areas within the Associated School Group (ASG), Ardgour and Lochaline Primary Schools, were not included in the proposed GM catchments, due to the costs and travel distances between these locations and Acharacle.
- 1.3 The Proposal Paper also suggested formalising the current arrangements relating to Gàidhlig Medium Education (GME) in Ardnamurchan High School, under which the catchment area for Ardnamurchan 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 Acharacle Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils.
- (ii) Parents of pupils attending Kilchoan Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils.
- (iii) Parents of pupils attending Strontian Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils.
- (iv) Parents of pupils attending Ardgour Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils.
- (v) Parents of pupils attending Lochaline Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils.
- (vi) Parents of pupils attending Ardnamurchan 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 29 September 2021. The meeting was advertised in advance on the Highland Council website and in the *Lochaber Times*. The note of the meeting is at **Appendix 2**.

2.5 The public meeting had originally been scheduled to take place at Acharacle Primary School, but was changed to an online meeting due to the continuing level 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 12 written responses received during the consultation period, although several of these reported the views of school pupils. A further response was received after the end of the consultation period. Copies of these can also be found at **Appendices 3i-3xiii**. Four responses were on behalf of organisations - Comann nam Pàrant, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Ardgour Community Council and Ardgour Primary School Parent Council.

### 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 Acharacle Primary School where there is GME provision.

#### 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) for Acharacle Primary School. 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.

Although we [i.e. CnamP] agree with the setting of the catchment, we welcome the assurance in the introduction to the proposal that, 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, Highland Council will follow the process for requests as set out in Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education.

#### Response 2

The Council notes and welcomes the response of Comann nam Pàrant, and confirms that any future parental demand for local provision of GME from within the Ardgour, Kilchoan, Lochaline and Strontian catchments would be assessed in accordance with the Education (Scotland) Act 2016.

**Issue 3**

I fully support this proposal so that my two young children get the opportunity to attend Gaelic Medium education when they are of age. Gaelic was my mother's first language, and I feel GM education should be available to every child in Highland.

**Response 3**

The Council notes and welcomes this response.

**Issue 4**

Everyone is entitled to learn Gaelic if they want to, so they should be able to travel to a school that offers the language.

Gaelic is the language of Scotland and should be available to everyone. It is fun to learn Gaelic. There should be no limit on travel.

**Response 4**

In principle the Council agrees that Gaelic should be available to every school pupil. For various reasons we are not yet in a position to achieve that, but there are more Gaelic medium pupils in Highland than in any other Council area in Scotland.

The geography of Highland is such that there are some areas where it is unrealistic to expect pupils to travel to Gaelic Medium education. A better solution would be to offer Gaelic Medium education in more schools than we currently do, and that would be our long-term goal.

**Issue 5**

Parents should have a choice. Since public transport to Fort William already exists, and this will likely affect a small minority, it does not seem unreasonable to offer the choice of a child attending either BSGL or Acharacle PS, with transport provided. Should the child go to Fort William you have nothing to arrange. Should they go to Acharacle the route to the school is extended for that child. Ardgour is in the position of being between two schools but close to neither.

We would always want to support Ardnamurchan High and the risk of children going to Fort William for their secondary schooling would increase should they attend a GM school in town.

The main hindrance to Ardgour PS pupils being included in the proposed catchment for Acharacle GM school is the distance and associated cost of



travel. The proposal suggests that 15 miles is deemed the furthest appropriate distance for primary pupils to travel.

Ardgour CC would consider the lack of the right to free transport to Acharacle PS (APS), a serious reduction in parental choice. The CC consider that parents in Ardgour should be given the opportunity to access either APS or Bun Sgoil Gaidhlig Loch Abair (BSGL) with equitable provision to free transport and also with equitable provision as the other peninsula schools in the Ardnamurchan HS Catchment. Following the HC Gaelic Language Policy, we should be encouraging young people to stay within their own communities and develop bi-lingual skills. It is recognised by the CC that pupils who attend BSGL are more likely to follow secondary education through to LHS encouraging our young people to leave the area in which they live. The Gaelic provision at Ardnamurchan High School and at Acharacle GME is recognised as being of a very high standard and brings young people across the peninsula together in a way that was not happening previously.

Points raised at our recent meeting included:

1. During previous historical communications with Area Manager (West) concerning the proposal to dual Lochaline Primary School and Ardgour Primary School, it was stressed that linking a school within the Ardnamurchan ASG was of primary importance in maintaining the specific nature of the peninsula culture, ethos and heritage. This statement was made during discussion on why it would be considered inappropriate to link Ardgour PS with a primary in the Onich/Balachulish area.
2. Following the decision of some parents in the Achaphubuil Primary school catchment area to remove their children to Banavie which eventually led to mothballing of Achaphubuil Primary, Highland Council was happy to provide transport to Banavie PS which is a greater distance than 15 miles. Please note that the distance to Ardgour PS for Achaphubuil residents and communities further west, is less than 15 miles.
3. A further point on distance is that the furthest outreach of the Ardgour PS catchment is 5 miles from Acharacle PS and, whereas the majority of Ardgour PS pupils come from the Ardgour and Clovullin areas, this would only mean an additional 5 miles to the arbitrary 15.

We have an amazing educational provision on the peninsula, including excellent GM provision at primary and secondary levels and would not wish to see this undermined by the exclusion of Ardgour PS pupils from the catchment for Acharacle GM school and potentially Ardnamurchan High School.

We request parity for GME provision for Ardgour and Lochaline with the other 3 peninsula schools and that they should be included within the catchment. Ardgour primary school is only 5 miles outwith the suggested catchment area, with most of their pupils within walking distance of the

primary school. The suggested maximum distance of 15 miles is arbitrary and in the past children have traveled further to access GME.

In the future, it would be all but impossible to establish a new GMU in either Ardgour or Lochaline as the threshold requires 4-5 pupils requesting GME in these tiny primary schools. After opening the Acharacle GMU 30 years ago, we tried and failed to establish GMUs in both Lochaline and Ardgour primary schools when their school roll was significantly greater. For HC to provide the opportunity to access GME for the Ardnamurchan and Morvern peninsulas requires Ardgour, Strontian, Lochaline and Kilchoan to be within the catchment area. The substantial Gaelic Specific Grant to HC, as well as support from BnG, should provide the funding for the necessary transport.

The current HC Gaelic Language Plan has a target of increasing the number of pupils in GME to 10% by 2023. Enrolment in 20/21 stands at only 6.8%. Including Ardgour and Lochaline in the catchment area will assist in the HC reaching their target. The active promotion of the educational and cognitive benefits of bilingual education would help HC to reach their target.

Finally, there is the remote and rural ethos of the Ardnamurchan and Morvern peninsulas with the pupils from all 5 primary schools attending Ardnamurchan High School. It has an excellent Gaelic dept with 3 teachers and a wide range of subjects available through GM. Both Ardgour and Lochaline are a part of that ethos and should be included within the catchment area for Acharacle GME Unit.

### **Response 5**

We would not offer a choice of transport to more than one school for GME purposes. In practical terms, someone living in North Corran or Clovullin could potentially cross the Corran Ferry and travel to the Bun-sgoil Gàidhlig Loch Abar (BSGL) using the public buses which travel between Fort William and South Lochaber, but their attendance at BSGL would be on a placing request basis. Since the creation of Ardnamurchan High School, only 3 children from Ardgour have ever travelled to Fort William to access GME, and two of these subsequently attended Ardnamurchan High. Based on past evidence, there seems little prospect of a significant shift of pupils away from the Peninsula towards BSGL and Lochaber High School.

Historically pupils attending GME have been offered transport within a 15-mile radius of the nearest school to offer GME. The delineation of catchments is designed to replace that informal system.

The Proposal Paper set out the reasons why it was originally proposed to exclude Ardgour PS from the proposed GM catchment for Acharacle PS, those reasons being the travel time and potential cost of such journeys, which in almost every case would involve a one-way journey of at least 25 miles, much of it along single track roads.

The Council still considers it is very unlikely that any pupil would wish to make such a journey, but we have reflected on the weight of the comments received during the consultation, and in response have decided to amend the proposal to include Ardgour PS within the GM catchment.

Under this revised proposal Lochaline would continue to be outside the GM catchment. The travel distance from Lochaline to Acharacle is even longer than that from Ardgour, and there have been no representations from Morvern itself on this matter. It is also understood that parents from Lochaline have expressed an interest in the provision of GME within Lochaline PS itself.

### Issue 6

I support the establishment of the catchment as proposed subject to the following qualifications:

- That, as stated on page 1 of the proposal paper, it remains open for other primary schools in the area to receive Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in the future - and that the presence of the catchment area is not used subsequently to argue against this;
- That flexibility is shown to pupils outwith the proposed catchment area to ensure they are assisted in accessing GME within the peninsulas, rather than being 'lost' to Fort William or Mull (and subsequently from Ardnamurchan High School);
- That it is recognised that a catchment area for Acharacle is only an acceptable solution short-term, and that the real opportunity lies in expanding GME provision to other primary schools within the Associated School Group.

With respect to the last of these, I would make the following further observations:

- The Education Scotland Act (2016) – and the slightly more flexible Highland Council policy deriving from it – are fundamentally flawed, in respect of assessment requests for GME. Setting a threshold of 4 or 5 pupils before an assessment can be made discriminates against small, rural primary schools, where this annual number of pupils overall is rarely if ever achieved. Thus the very areas with the closest links to Gaelic as a community language are being prevented from accessing GME. Highland Council, through both officers and elected members, needs to address this issue and also raise it with Scottish Government.
- Paragraph 1.1 of the proposal references the statutory duty “to promote and support Gaelic Medium education and learning” of education authorities. This is welcome and it is hoped will be adhered to. However, it is important to contrast this with the reality, through my own ‘lived experience’ in Strontian. During the 17-year period when I had children in nursery and/or primary school, I cannot

recall a single instance of such promotion of GME – and as a strong supporter, it is most unlikely I would have forgotten. Not once did Highland Council provide information to parents, through distribution of leaflets, letters home in school bags, organising parent or community meetings etc. It is hard not to conclude from this that HC is not in fact committed to expanding the geographical coverage of GME, and indeed the evidence on the ground seems to bear this out – there are actually fewer GME primary schools in the HC area now than there were 10 years ago (2011-12). *[Bòrd na Gàidhlig data]*

### Response 6

Paragraph 1.30 of the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education states that the threshold for an *obligatory* full assessment under the 2016 Act is where an education authority is satisfied that there is demand for Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) in the GMPE assessment area from the parents of at least five children who are resident in the GMPE assessment area and all in the same pre-school year group. However, at all times, education authorities retain a *discretion* to provide GMPE, and the Statutory Guidance goes on to state that an education authority should consider other information, such as demand in relation to children in a different year group, in deciding whether to exercise that discretion.

Since there is a discretion to create GMPE in a school even where the condition of five children in a year group is not met, there is no need to raise the issue further with Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

Clearly the smaller the number of children in a GME class, the less viable the class becomes.

### Issue 7

I would like to add my support to the comments made in relation to the potential impact on Ardnamurchan High School should the proposal to formalise the Acharacle GM catchment area go ahead. Acharacle's catchment area is within Ardnamurchan High school's catchment area and therefore any changes to Acharacle's boundaries will impact on AHS.

As was highlighted, if the invitation to establish GM provision is taken up by parents from Lochaline or Ardgour, (and if for any one of several reasons they are unable to have GME provided for their children on their own premises), they will therefore be obliged to send their children to BSGL, as the only viable option open to them. It is natural therefore, having been primary schooled in BSGL that these children will proceed to Àrd-sgoil Lochabar for their secondary schooling.

Any leakage of pupils, in this case, GM pupils from Lochaline or Ardgour primaries who would previously have fed onto AHS, will almost certainly have a detrimental effect on AHS as a whole. Not least, the potential loss of teaching staff or teachers' hours due to a reduction in school roll.

It is also worth noting however, that a reduction in GM pupils and hence staff, will not only impact on GME but also on the whole-school experience of both EM and GM pupils alike. This issue therefore is not just of concern to parents of GM pupils whose cohort numbers will naturally be reduced (not a great model for encouraging increased language use between peers), but for all future parents who are seeking quality education and the best all-round experience for their children at Àrd-sgoil Àird nam Murchain.

### **Response 7**

The issues related to Ardgour are covered at Response 5.

If, in the event, GMPE is not established within Lochaline Primary School itself, there is no more reason to suppose pupils from that catchment would submit a placing request to BSGL than they would to Acharacle PS. The journey from Lochaline to Caol would take more than an hour one-way by road, plus a crossing of the Corran Ferry.

### **Issue 8**

Without knowing the demand, how can you make the statement in 9.1 of the Proposal Paper. You don't know how many parents (current or future) are likely to take their children out of Strontian Primary and therefore can't say with any certainty what effect it is going have on the school roll and consequently the staff and staffing level.

### **Response 8**

Paragraph 9.1 of the Proposal Paper (see Appendix A) advised that the Council "does not expect" any significant impact on local school rolls, or on staff within the schools of the Ardnamurchan ASG. This view is based on 3 factors:

- i. There is an existing "custom and practice" arrangement under which pupils from the Strontian PS catchment can attend Gaelic Medium Education (GME) at Acharacle PS, and at the present time a small number of pupils from the Strontian PS catchment do exactly that. As the Proposal simply formalises that existing arrangement, the Council does believe that, in itself, it is likely to have a significant impact on current patterns of enrolment within the primary schools of the Ardnamurchan Associated School Group (ASG).
- ii. So far, Highland Council has created 11 Gaelic Medium catchment areas and in most of these, the new GM catchment overlays several English Medium catchments, as has been proposed for Acharacle. However, in none of these have we

seen any significant shifts in patterns of enrolment from before and after the creation of the catchment.

- iii. The travel time between Strontian and Acharacle will clearly be a factor for any parent in the Strontian school catchment who is considering enrolling their child in Acharacle PS.

4.2 The note of the public meeting is at Appendix 2. Eleven questions and observations 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 agreed that the proposal has potential to result in educational benefits. However, there are a few aspects of the proposal still to be considered to ensure that all learners progressing to Ardnamurchan High School have equity and equality in how they access learning of and through Gaelic.

5.3 Inspectors noted that the strategic leaders within the associated school group are very aware of the local and rural contexts of their schools. They talked about embedding a vision for an 'Ardnamurchan identity'. Along with a few others, their desire was to not lose potential pupils from Ardgour Primary through placing requests to other schools. In the final report, the council should be clearer on how they will reduce barriers to future requests from parents for Gaelic Medium Education at Lochaline and Ardgour Primary Schools. This should include addressing barriers such as transport costs and smaller pupil rolls as may be part of rural education. The council should also be clear on how their proposal supports the expansion of funded free hours being available through Gaelic for children aged three to five years. The educational benefit statement should include how the proposal is going to help the council meet their Gaelic language plan targets for the secondary stages. This is as part of a progressive 3-18 immersion curriculum. It should include how all children and young people in English Medium can learn Gaelic regularly and progressively as a means to promote equity. In doing this, there should be clarity on the different outcomes from Gaelic (Learners) and Gaelic Medium Education.

5.5 HMIE Inspectors recommended that, in its final report, the council needs to make clear how parents make future requests for establishing further Gaelic Medium Education as set out in the Education (Scotland) Act 2016. They should do so with a particular regard to rural areas. They also need to mitigate against potential future equity barriers such as transport costs and access to early learning and childcare through Gaelic. These may prevent parents

making placing requests for Gaelic Medium Education. The council, working with the senior leaders within the associated school group, should have a clear strategy to promote the benefits and opportunities for Gaelic Medium Education in an ongoing, robust way. They should also provide more detail on how children will travel safely during long journeys.

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

In the final report, the council should be clearer on how they will reduce barriers to future requests from parents for Gaelic Medium Education at Lochaline and Ardgour Primary Schools. This should include addressing barriers such as transport costs and smaller pupil rolls as may be part of rural education.

In its final report, the council needs to make clear how parents make future requests for establishing further Gaelic Medium Education as set out in the Education (Scotland) Act 2016. They should do so with a particular regard to rural areas. They also need to mitigate against potential future equity barriers such as transport costs and access to early learning and childcare through Gaelic. They should also provide more detail on how children will travel safely during long journeys.

### Response 9

The Proposal Paper made it clear that any identified parental demand for local provision of GME from within the Ardgour and Lochaline catchments would be assessed in accordance with the Education (Scotland) Act 2016. This process would also apply to the Strontian and Kilchoan catchments, that are included within the proposed GM catchment.

Advice to parents on how to make requests for establishing further Gaelic Medium Education as set out in the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 has been incorporated within the Highland Council website.

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

In order to make travelling on high school buses safer for primary age pupils, we can assign specific seats in the front of the bus to be reserved for

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

#### **Issue 10**

The council should also be clear on how their proposal supports the expansion of funded free hours being available through Gaelic for children aged three to five years.

#### **Response 10**

Currently there is full 1140 hours per annum provision through Gaelic available at Acharacle School Nursery.

#### **Issue 11**

The educational benefit statement should include how the proposal is going to help the council meet their Gaelic language plan targets for the secondary stages. This is as part of a progressive 3-18 immersion curriculum.

#### **Response 11**

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 12**

The educational benefits statement should include how all children and young people in English Medium can learn Gaelic regularly and progressively as a means to promote equity. In doing this, there should be clarity on the different outcomes from Gaelic (Learners) and Gaelic Medium Education.

### **Response 12**

Gaelic is L2 for schools across the ASG.

For Acharacle and Kilchoan primaries, the Expectations & Outcomes are followed by the class teachers and staff use Go Gaelic as the main resource. Staff can access GL training. The school ensures they have access to Fèis musicians who promote Gaelic, singing tutors, participation in the Mod. In Kilchoan there is also have a retired teacher volunteer (pre Covid restrictions) who comes in weekly. This year they are also using CNAG and drama tutors to provide GL sessions alongside GM. Gaelic language is used and promoted in the general language of the schools – greetings, basic phrases, songs, stories of the local culture.

At Strontian PS, EM pupils have Gaelic as L2. Go Gaelic is also the main resource. Basic Gaelic is embedded across the school. The school are investigating further engagement with Feis tutors and have contributed to the on-line Mod concert with support of a Gaelic Singing Tutor. This is now continuing through the YMI initiative to provide regular Gaelic singing for P5-7.

Ardnamurchan High School has a strong ethos of equity between Gaelic and English with all pupils taking Gaelic throughout the BGE. Gaelic is the majority language for uptake in the Senior Phase and the school holds regular Gaelic Assemblies. Film G is embedded in the curriculum, and staff model the use of Gaelic wherever possible. Gaelic Medium pupils are taught separately from learners, (for both language and social subjects in the BGE) but Film G, Mod and assemblies provide opportunity for all to share in the school's Gaelic Ethos.

Staff in Lochaline and Ardgour have worked towards gaining greater knowledge/skills in Gaelic as part of their career long professional learning

to develop their confidence when delivering Gaelic to children. Staff have access to a range of Gaelic resources.

In Ardgour, nursery staff also deliver Gaelic rhyme-time sessions.

### **Issue 13**

The council, working with the senior leaders within the associated school group, should have a clear strategy to promote the benefits and opportunities for Gaelic Medium Education in an ongoing, robust way.

### **Response 13**

Highland Council is the largest provider of Gaelic Medium Education in Scotland. Our Education service has 203 schools in total, covering a geographical area nearly the size of Belgium. The area is a mix of urban, semi urban and rural areas and we have ambition to provide opportunities for Gaelic across the whole region. Over the last year, the Council has increased the profile of Gaelic, invested in the team, established a Gaelic Committee and Gaelic is embedded in the Council's Executive Leadership Team, led by an Executive Chief Officer. This reflects that the Council is committed to growing and developing the GM and GL Education sector; Gaelic learning and curriculum development; and Gaelic culture and communities.

The Council plans to focus on growth in ELC and 0-3, curriculum development, support to ASN, and focus on language use within our communities for both our children and our fragile communities to ensure Gaelic has a sustained and strong presence. These are the key priorities within our projects over the next year and beyond.

Challenges include our geography, demographics with a declining population and the protection of our fragile Gaelic communities. Growth in GME is impacted by a lack of probationer allocation teachers, difficulty in recruiting Gaelic teachers and a narrowing of curriculum choice at the senior phase. An understanding of our challenges helps us direct our resources and this re-invigoration of our ambition for Gaelic means that we feel with additional resource, we have a good opportunity to make a positive lasting impact.

Despite the challenges of COVID, the Council was able to demonstrate flexibility and sustained commitment to Gaelic through the provision of a program of adjusted delivery. It was able to maintain a good level of engagement and developed tools and approaches adopted as best practice elsewhere.

There is now a need to focus on providing support where it is needed following the interruption to the total immersion phase and the likely confidence gap which may have impacted on our pupils in GME.

The Highland Council's third generation Gaelic Language Plan 2018-2023 was submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig on September 18th, 2017. The Plan has been developed under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. The Highland Council has received statutory approval from Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

The Plan has 6 priority areas which are as follows:

1. Gaelic in the Home, Early Learning and Childcare
2. Gaelic in the Community
3. Gaelic in Education
4. Gaelic in the Arts, Culture and Heritage
5. Gaelic in the Workplace
6. The Social, Economic and Cultural Value of Gaelic

The specific Strategic Commitments within each Priority Areas are bulleted below.

Further details on outcomes and promotion of Priority Area 1, 2 and 3 outlined under Outcomes and Promotion section below.

Priority Area 1. Gaelic in the Home, Early Learning and Childcare

- Continue to support Highland partnerships to create resources to encourage and support parents or guardians in using Gaelic in the home and early learning and childcare provision.

Priority Area 2. Gaelic in the Community

- Provide opportunities to encourage and increase the use of Gaelic in the community.
- Contribute to and support Community Partnership Development Plans and link with existing groups to promote and support an inclusive approach to Gaelic, within Locality Plans.
- Continue to support and advise community groups in relation to Gaelic development and usage.

Priority Area 3. Gaelic in Education

- Contribute to national strategic partnership initiatives and policy formulation across Gaelic education.
- Ensure that Gaelic education is embedded in The Highland Council's Strategic Education Improvement Planning.
- Build on established partnerships to continue to grow a professionally organised and trained staff to support the 0–3 Early Learning and Childcare sector.
- Develop 3–18 Gaelic Education through a systematic and sustainable approach to increase the percentage of Gaelic Learners in establishments.
- Work with partners to review the learning materials and learning resources provided to support Gaelic Education.

Priority Area 4. Gaelic Arts, Culture and Heritage

- Engage with partners and contribute to national strategic initiatives and policy formulation for Gaelic in the arts, culture and heritage sectors.

- Increase the profile and usage of Gaelic within Council-funded organisations and events across the Highlands.
- Develop opportunities for people to engage with Gaelic through the arts and creative industries.

The Council will:

- i. Participate in the work of the National Gaelic Arts Strategy.
- ii. Work with Fèisean nan Gàidheal and Fèis Rois through our Service Delivery Contracts, to support Fèisean based in the Highlands in promoting and increasing Gaelic in their outputs.
- iii. Work with High Life Highland and partners to raise the profile and increase the usage and visibility of Gaelic throughout visitor attractions, leisure facilities, museums, archive centres and at events.

Priority Area 5. Gaelic in the Workplace

- Continue to increase the status, profile, awareness and usage of Gaelic across all Council services.
- Identify and provide opportunities for Elected Members and Officers to learn Gaelic and improve their linguistic competence, to increase Gaelic usage.
- Increase opportunities to raise the profile and use of Gaelic when working with external partners and relevant stakeholders.

Ardnamurchan High School is able to promote the Gaelic ethos to all pupils across the peninsula through transition, curriculum and events.

## **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 There would be no effect on school transport within the Acharacle PS catchment.

## **9.0 Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements**

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

## **10.0 Alleged omissions or inaccuracies**

10.1 There was an alleged inaccuracy at paragraph 9.1 of the Proposal Paper, which is addressed at Response 8 above.

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. Response 8 above sets out the Council's reason for coming to this conclusion.

## **11.0 Overall Review of Consultation Exercise**

- 11.1 This consultation exercise generated a better response than others of this type, and the public meeting was relatively well-attended.
- 11.2 The point most consistently made in response was that the catchment area of Ardgour Primary School should be included within the GM catchment for Acharacle Primary School. The Council has responded to these representations, as set out in Response 5 above, and paragraph 13.3 below.

## **12.0 Legal issues**

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

## **13.0 Conclusion**

- 13.1 The consultation process has complied fully with legislative requirements and has provided an opportunity for all parties to identify key issues of concern. These issues have been fully considered and the Council's response detailed in sections 4 and 6 above.
- 13.2 The Education Scotland Inspector met online with parents, pupils and staff at Acharacle 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 Acharacle Primary School offers educational benefits and should be implemented, but with an expanded catchment area from that set out in the Proposal Paper. The revised GM catchment area for Acharacle PS should overlay the current EM catchments for Acharacle PS, Strontian PS, Kilchoan PS, and Ardgour PS. A revised catchment map can be found at **Appendix 6**. Lochaline PS will remain outside the new GM catchment, both because of the distances involved in travel and because local parents are seeking GM provision within Lochaline PS itself.

## **14.0 Recommendation**

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

**Nicky Grant**

**Executive Chief Officer, Education**

**31 January 2022**

## **CONSULTATION MEETING – GAELIC MEDIUM CATCHMENT AREA FOR ACHARACLE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**HELD ON TEAMS – 29 September 2021 – 6.30pm**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING**

#### **Panel**

Cllr. Andrew Baxter - Chairperson  
Ian Jackson, Education Officer, Resources  
Don Esson, Area Education Manager  
Lena Walker, Gaelic Education Support Officer

#### **Also Attending**

Chris-Millar-Craig, HT, Ardnamurchan HS  
Lyndsay Bradley, HT, Acharacle and Kilchoan Primaries  
Louise MacLean, HT, Ardgour and Lochaline Primaries  
Maggie Mulholland, Community Learning Officer  
Joan Esson, Education Scotland  
Jim Whannel, BnaG  
Ann Mhoireasdan, BnaG  
Magaidh Wentworth, CnamP  
Riona Whyte, CALA  
Patricia Kennedy, Ardgour CC  
Joanne Matheson  
Jamie Mcintyre  
Sarah Traynor  
Margaret Ford  
Michael Foxley  
Margaret Jane MacDonald  
Izzy Buchan  
Angus MacKay  
Hollie Taylor

**Apologies:** None.

**Chair - Cllr. Andrew Baxter** introduced himself as Chair of the Lochaber Area Committee. He welcomed everyone to the public meeting on the Proposal for a GM catchment for Acharacle Primary School and explained the protocol for Teams meetings.

**Cllr. Baxter** - The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the proposal to formally establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Acharacle 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 Don Esson, 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.

### **Ian Jackson**

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 8 October, and I would urge anyone who wants to submit views in 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 8 October, 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 Acharacle 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 covers the catchments of Acharacle PS, Strontian PS and Kilchoan PS. We do not propose to include the Ardgour and Lochaline catchments, the reasons for that being set out in the Proposal Paper. 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 Acharacle Primary catchment itself, and at the present time we do have children from outwith Acharacle attending GME at the school. To an extent this Proposal is simply formalising arrangements which have already been operating in practice.

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.

**Cllr. Baxter** - Lena Walker will now speak about the Gaelic educational issues set out in the Proposal Paper.

### **Lena Walker**

Gaelic Medium Education is about offering children the opportunity of bilingualism. Bilingualism is about a lot more than two languages. There are 3 main advantages we can speak to, social, linguistic and cognitive. By giving families the choice of choosing a Gaelic Medium Education for their children, they are offering them new opportunities. Socially, children have access to two cultures which in turn leads to more tolerance to and more interest in other cultures. Linguistically, total immersion can lead to an earlier awareness of sounds and words with an enhanced language learning ability impacting on improved literacy skills. Cognitively, there are many benefits which are widely published and all 3 advantages are backed by research. Therefore, total immersion learning in Gaelic is a wonderful opportunity to provide children with the benefits of bilingualism. Bilingualism is essential to both enhancing Gaelic and for the survival of Gaelic in many of Highland's communities.

The Statutory Guidance recommends that Catchment Area 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 in an area follows a demand lead by parental request. 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 usage, 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 on Gaelic Medium Education.

**The Chairperson** then explained that Mr Esson, Mr Jackson and Mrs Walker were available to answer questions.

### **Q1 - Riona Whyte**

CALA are responsible for the Gaelic Parent and Toddler groups. Ardgour and Lochaline are not included. Are there any plans for GME provision in these areas?

### **A1 – Ian Jackson**

Up until recently, we were not aware of parental demand. I have heard in the last few days that pre-school pupils are interested in Lochaline. Given the travel distances involved, I speculate that they will be more interested in GME at Lochaline itself rather than in travelling to Acharacle. There is a set process for this and any formal request for GMPE will be assessed by the Council. If there was a requirement, we would follow this process.



**Q2 – Riona Whyte**

There is a resurgence in interest in GME in Lochaline. Eight pre-school children are identified as interested and there is a meeting tomorrow about changing the local toddler group to a Gaelic Medium toddler group.

**Chair** – For the benefit of those who are unaware, can I ask Ian to outline the process for requesting provision?

**A2 - Ian Jackson**

This is a Scottish Government process. There is a form called Gaelic Medium in Primary Education that parents must complete. On receipt of one of those forms, there is a set process that the Council is obliged to go through to assess the need for GME. We would assess a range of factors such as the capacity of the school, number of parents, availability of staff etc. It's a reactive process for the Council as parents are expected to submit the request in the first instance.

**Q3 - Jamie Macintyre**

My interest is no longer as a parent as my children have all left primary school, but perhaps as a grandparent one day. I also have an interest as Chair of Strontian Community School Building, although tonight I am speaking in a private capacity. I have a brief question based on the end of page 1 of the Paper. On the process Ian has just explained for identified parental demand for GME, will this also apply to Kilchoan and Strontian, so that the setting up of this catchment will not have any adverse impact on the ability of parents to request GME in Strontian itself?

**A3 - Ian Jackson**

That is correct. The legislation applies to all schools. It would be open to Strontian and Kilchoan parents to make the same sort of request as we have just discussed. In designating a catchment for Acharacle we are trying to allow access to GME over as wide an area as we think is reasonable, but that does not preclude parents in Strontian or Kilchoan seeking their own provision within their own school.

**Q4 - Jamie Macintyre**

I would like to share some observations. Firstly, I have concerns about the process set out as part of the Education Act 2016. To request a GMPE Assessment requires 5 pupils, although pupil numbers can be relaxed to 4 for example, at the discretion of Highland Council. This is structurally biased against small rural primary schools, because it is absolutely impossible in many years to get 4 pupils of any kind, let alone 4 GM pupils. I feel strongly about this and call on councillors and MSPs to say that this legislation is flawed and discriminates against small rural schools.

Secondly, the Act places a duty on local authorities to promote Gaelic. I've had children in nursery and primary school over a period of 17 years and my experience, as a parent, is that on no single occasion has Highland Council promoted Gaelic to my children or to myself as a parent. By that I mean no information in school bags,

no guest speakers, nothing at all. It is only because of my own interest that I know of Gaelic education. Highland Council needs to promote Gaelic for every single parent and let them know what they should do to access GME if they have an interest.

#### **A4 - Cllr Baxter**

I will find a mechanism to feed this back, via the Council, to Scottish Government and relevant Ministers. I will also find a way of feeding back your more general points about the promotion of Gaelic via our schools to the Gaelic Committee. I am pleased to say that we have a standalone Gaelic Committee again, whereas it had previously been subsumed within other Committees.

#### **A4 (continued) - Don Esson**

These are two very valid points and observations to feed back to Scottish Government and councillors. I am disappointed with your observation about the promotion of Gaelic education by the Council. With the new Gaelic Committee, there has been a resurgence of Gaelic support within the Council. We will need to ensure that the situation Jamie describes does not happen in the future.

#### **Q5 - Patricia Kennedy**

I am representing Ardgour Community Council who have had a discussion about the Proposal. I have since circulated some thoughts which none of the other CC members have disagreed with. I would like to share those thoughts and ask a question. The question from the Community Council is - what would happen if a parent/child from Ardgour wished to access Gaelic Medium education and there is no transport provision to Acharacle?

#### **A5 - Don Esson**

If there is demand for one child, this would follow placing request procedures, although we know that transport is not provided to children on placing requests. Historically in Ardgour, children accessing GME used the Corran ferry to catch a bus to Fort William, and today we have provision available in Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar (BSGLA). The point which Jamie made about the numbers necessary for local provision of GME is acknowledged as a challenge.

#### **Q6 - Patricia Kennedy**

Would the council consider providing travel to GME in Acharacle as well as to BSGLA? From the perspective of the cultural ethos of Gaelic within the Ardnamurchan Peninsula, I think parents would like the option of attending Acharacle. At a point in the past, when Norma Young was Area Manager, there was a consultation about linking Ardgour and Lochaline schools under a single HT. During that consultation a question arose about possibly linking Ardgour with St. Bride's PS, and Norma was very, very clear that children should not be taken away from a rural area where Gaelic is strong.

**A6 - Don Esson**

Highland Council will consider the representation being made.

**Q7 - Patricia Kennedy**

My only other observation is on the 15-mile travel limit for travelling to another primary school. Previously when Achaphubuil School was mothballed due to parental movement in favour of Banavie Primary School, there was no problem with providing transport between those communities. That practice seems to have been contrary to the suggested 15-mile limit which prevents transport from Ardgour to Acharacle Primary School.

**A7 - Ian Jackson**

The 15-mile limit is an informal rule that we have in place at the moment to determine transport to GME. We are proposing to replace this rule with GM catchment areas, and clearly some of the areas that we are proposing to include within the new catchment – such as Kilchoan, and the further reaches of the Strontian catchment, if I can put that way - are further than 15 miles from Acharacle. We are moving away from the “15-mile rule”. In terms of the travel distance between Ardgour and Acharacle, it’s really a judgment call as to whether to include Ardgour or leave it out. Don has already spoken about this, and the proposal as it stands will leave Ardgour outwith any GM catchment. The Statutory Guidance is that any GME catchment should involve reasonable travel. It’s 26 miles between the two schools, and much of it is on single track roads, once you leave Strontian. However as Don said, we are here tonight to set out our proposal and to hear views, and all views expressed here will be taken away and considered in full before a final decision is reached.

**Patricia Kennedy**

We will be submitting a written response and we will include these comments within that.

**Q8 - Michael Foxley**

Like others I have a question and some observations. I am surprised to see this reference to the Statutory Guidance and GM catchment areas. I spoke with Bruce Robertson, past Director of Education for Highland Council, who chaired the group that produced this legislation. He said that the Guidance only applies to new GME provisions and not to those already established - so that’s my question.

**A8 - Ian Jackson**

I don’t have the relevant paragraph of the Statutory Guidance in front of me at the moment, but as I recall it says that local authorities should create GM catchments for all of their schools that offer GM education. There is separate legislation, The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, which specifies that the creation of a new catchment area, or a change to a catchment area, is subject to statutory

consultation. This is clearly a matter of interpretation, but reading the two pieces of legislation together, I would have to disagree with Bruce Robertson on this. Even if this Proposal did not require statutory consultation, it would be good practice to have these sorts of discussions anyway, prior to setting up a GM catchment. I will though, send you an email with a bit more explanation on the relevant paragraphs from the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education.

### **Chair**

This isn't the first statutory consultation we have undertaken to establish a GM catchment area in Highland. Has this issue been raised previously?

### **Ian Jackson**

It hasn't. We have now established 11 GM catchments, and this is 1 of 2 currently out to consultation, and this point has not been made before. I also understand from Lena that Aberdeenshire Council have recently started a consultation exercise on setting up a GM catchment for their GM provision.

### **Q9 - Michael Foxley**

I have a few more comments, which are meant kindly as we are all amongst friends here. The first point I would like to make is that GME at Acharacle Primary School has been a spectacular success. Two-thirds of the roll is now in GME and that's a tribute to staff, parents, children and the community. The second point is about this 15-mile limit which I think Ian would accept is arbitrary. My own children travelled 22 miles to GME in Fort William. The Strontian catchment extends to Inversanda which is only about 5 miles from Ardgour, so it doesn't seem a huge issue to extend the GM catchment that bit further. I think we need some flexibility over that. I'm delighted to hear about the enthusiasm for GME in Morvern – but as Jamie put it very eloquently, the big issue for Ardgour and Lochaline is that the intake at these small schools is tiny. They are down to 1 or 2 children a year. In the past Highland Council applied flexibility for smaller schools, but if we are insisting that there are 3 or 4 children in a year group before we would introduce GME – well, I would like to be proven wrong but I think it's next to impossible.

My next point is that in the Council's Gaelic Language Plan, there is a target to have 10% of pupils in GME by 2023. Where is the Council with this?

I would like to reinforce the point that Trish Kennedy made, about the rural ethos of the Peninsula. It's also the point that pupils from Ardgour PS transfer to Ardmamurchan High School for secondary education. Ardmamurchan High has far stronger GME provision than Lochaber High School despite having only a fraction of the numbers. My plea is that at this stage, Morvern and Ardgour should be left within the Acharacle GM catchment. For parity of access to GME, we should include all the peninsula primary schools.

### **A9 - Ian Jackson**

We will get the data on the proportion of pupils in GME sent to you.

**A9 (continued) - Don Esson**

We also echo the congratulations on the success of GME at both Acharacle Primary School and Ardnamurchan High School.

**A9 (continued) - Lena Walker**

There is an increase in the percentage of pupils in GME in Highland. We have not yet achieved the 10% target, but we will share more detail on what the breakdown of this looks like.

**Q10 - Riona Whyte**

I have a question from Sarah Traynor who was here but whose connection has dropped out. Can you clarify if transport will be provided for nursery aged children as well as primary aged children?

**A10 - Ian Jackson**

We do not provide transport for nursery aged children.

**Q11 - Christopher Millar-Craig**

Mòran taing agus feasgar math. My role as Head Teacher is to make an observation and not argue with Highland Council Policy. I guard the boundaries of my school jealously. I think the success of Ardnamurchan High School has created an identity amongst our young people. I guard that identity very jealously but also, from a more mercenary point of view, every child is important for the school's staffing quota. The question was well put by Ardgour CC – if children in Ardgour wish to access GME, where is the logical place for them to go? If the easier journey is to BSGLA, then they will go on to Lochaber High School. We have a fluctuating school roll, that rises and falls dramatically. If we leak pupils from Ardgour to Lochaber High, for the best of reasons - and becoming fluent in Gaelic is the best of reasons - it will nevertheless have an impact on our school.

**Chair**

There is a fragile school roll and we note the implications of this. Thank you for making that point. I wouldn't have expected anything less of you as Head Teacher.

Before I bring this meeting to a close, I would like to highlight that am heartened by the number of people taking an interest in this consultation, and I think it probably reflects the interest in Gaelic in this area. A useful discussion tonight that will be fed back to the Education Committee in the months ahead. Thank you for your attendance.

Can I remind everyone that representations should be sent to Ian Jackson, email [Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk) (address circulated in the letter), or via the online form, to arrive **no later than the 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2021**.

Finally, I am to advise you 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 Acharacle Primary School**

1. No contact details available.
2. Summary of pupil views – Ardgour and Lochaline Primary Schools
3. Summary of pupil views – Strontian PS
4. Summary of pupil views – Acharacle Primary School
5. Summary of pupil views – Kilchoan Primary School
6. Ardgour Primary School Parent Council
7. Ardgour Community Council
8. Bòrd na Gàidhlig
9. Comann nam Pàrant
10. Michael Foxley
11. Jamie Macintyre
12. Angus MacKay
13. Jamie Tait – response received after closure of consultation period.

**From:** School consultation <donotreply@highland.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 25 August 2021 23:06  
**To:** Education Consultations  
**Subject:** Acharacle Gaelic Medium consultation comments

**Categories:** Acknowledgement letter sent

**Name of consultation:** Acharacle Gaelic Medium

**Your comments:** I live in Strontian and would fully support this proposal so that my two young children get the opportunity to attend Gaelic Medium education when they are of age. My 2 year old son currently attends An Cearcall, the Gaelic playgroup in Acharacle. Gaelic was my mother's first language, and I feel GM education should be available to every child in Highland.

**Upload documents or letters :**



### Summary of Pupil Views – Ardgour and Lochaline

Most of the views are very much the same from our children in Ardgour P5-7 – not fussed as it doesn't involve us, not a big deal, I don't have an opinion, I don't mind, I don't mind, nothing to say. P1-4 were slightly more opinionated and said they didn't want their school to change so it suited them and they enjoy learning the Gaelic as it is just now.

Lochaline – The children explained that none of them wanted to be taught in Gaelic so would not impact them. They said that they wanted to learn a bit of Gaelic and would like to be able to have a conversation in Gaelic. They said they understand that Acharacle is a very long drive for them and would make a very long school day.

Hope that's ok!  
Louise

**From:** Ian Jackson (Support Services) <[ian.jackson@highland.gov.uk](mailto:ian.jackson@highland.gov.uk)>  
**Sent:** 27 September 2021 15:00  
**To:** Louise MacLean (Education) <[Louise.MacLean@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Louise.MacLean@highland.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** Pupil views on GM catchment

As discussed, could you arrange to have a discussion with the children to find out whether they agree with our view that Ardgour and Lochaline are too far from Acharacle for pupils to travel there for GME?

I attach a questionnaire that sets out what we want from the pupils. Basically I am just looking for staff to explain the proposal, get the children's opinions and if possible why they said what they did. You don't need to return the questionnaire itself, just a summary of views.

Give me a call if you have any queries.

Ian Jackson  
Education Officer  
Highland Council  
07435 982557

Highland Council has to decide which places children can come from if they want to go to the Gaelic classes at Acharacle Primary School.

There are 5 primary schools where children go to Ardnamurchan High School once they leave P7. Acharacle Primary is the only one of the five where children can learn in Gaelic all the time.

We need to decide what happens to children in the other 4 schools who also want to learn in Gaelic, and our ideas are below:

1. We think that children from Strontian Primary should get to go to Acharacle Primary if they want to learn in Gaelic.
2. We think that children from Kilchoan Primary should get to go to Acharacle Primary if they want to learn in Gaelic.
3. We think Ardgour Primary is too far from Acharacle for the children to be able to travel to learn in Gaelic.
4. We think Lochaline Primary is too far from Acharacle for the children to be able to travel to learn in Gaelic.

The map shows where pupils would travel to, if they want to learn in Gaelic

Do you think our ideas are good ones? Please tick the answer below that you think is best.

YES	<p>We only asked Question 1 here in Strontian Primary.</p> <p>One pupil thought yes as it was nearer that e.g. Bun-Sgoil Gaidhlig Loch Abar. Others didn't have much of a view, but nodded when pressed!</p>
NO	

**Can you tell us why you gave the answer above?**

Closer.

Highland Council has been told we have to decide which places children go come from if they want to the Gaelic classes at Acharacle Primary School.

There are 5 primary schools where children go to Ardnamurchan High School once they leave P7. Acharacle Primary is the only one of the five where children can learn in Gaelic all the time.

We need to decide what happens to children in the other 4 schools who also want to learn in Gaelic, and our ideas are below:

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3. We think Ardgour Primary is too far from Acharacle for the children to be able to travel to learn in Gaelic.
4. We think Lochaline Primary is too far from Acharacle for the children to be able to travel to learn in Gaelic.

The map shows where pupils would travel to, if they want to learn in Gaelic

Do you think our ideas are good ones? Please tick the answer below that you think is best.

Q 1e2

<p><b>YES</b>    <i>HHH HHH I</i> <i>HHH HHH I</i></p>	
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Q 3e4

<p><b>NO</b>    <i>HHH HHH I</i></p> <p>3. Yes <i>III</i>    No <i>HHH IIII</i></p> <p>4. Yes            No <i>HHH IIII</i></p>	<p><i>It is a long way but if you're very keen they could come if they would "Just pop over"</i></p>
---	--

*Everyone should have the chance to learn Gaelic and the distance doesn't matter. Ellie*

Can you tell us why you gave the answer above?

- Anyone should get the chance to learn Gaelic but up to them how far they travel as some schools are a long way away (all) Same from P2-7 E
- This is a good school so why not come and learn. (Angus)
- You have the right to come and learn Gaelic. (Anna)
- We have great teachers (mmm)
- Gaelic is fun (Isla)
- Gaelic is good for your brain (Angus)
- It's the language of Scotland and it's good to learn languages (Anna)
- Everyone have some chance to learn (Duncan)
- Yes it's a long way so can they not learn in their own area so they don't have to travel
- If they want to learn Gaelic they'll travel. Innes K
- There shouldn't be a limit. They're entitled to learn in the school that provides Gaelic. Innes C
- Everyone has the right to learn Gaelic - Jennifer

Highland Council has been told we have to decide which places children go come from if they want to the Gaelic classes at Acharacle Primary School.

There are 5 primary schools where children go to Ardnamurchan High School once they leave P7. Acharacle Primary is the only one of the five where children can learn in Gaelic all the time.

We need to decide what happens to children in the other 4 schools who also want to learn in Gaelic, and our ideas are below:

1. We think that children from Strontian Primary should get to go to Acharacle Primary if they want to learn in Gaelic.
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4. We think Lochaline Primary is too far from Acharacle for the children to be able to travel to learn in Gaelic.

The map shows where pupils would travel to, if they want to learn in Gaelic

Do you think our ideas are good ones? Please tick the answer below that you think is best.

YES	It isn't too far if you were really keen to learn in Gaelic.
NO 	It is such a long way and the road is too bumpy

Can you tell us why you gave the answer above?

- If we wanted to learn Gaelic we would travel. Cailean
- Not many people in Kilchoan speak Gaelic so who would we use it with "Allan"

**Name of consultation:** Acharacle Gaelic Medium

**Your comments:** On behalf of Ardgour Primary School Parent Council. Only a few parents responded to the call for comments. Of them opinion was mixed. Some felt that Acharacle would be too far away for a child from Ardgour to attend but that the connection to the peninsula was important. The strongest voice was the call for parents to have a choice. Since public transport to Fort William already exists, and this will likely affect a small minority, it did not seem unreasonable to offer the choice of a child attending either, with transport provided. Should the child go to Fort William you have nothing to arrange. Should they go to Acharacle the route to the school is extended for that child. Ardgour is in the position of being between two schools but close to neither. We would always want to support Ardnamurchan High and the risk of children going to Fort William for their secondary schooling would increase should they attend a GM school in town.



## Ardgour Community Council Response

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Acharacle GM Catchment area consultation. Ardgour Community Council (CC) would like to make the following response:

Considering the proposal, we deemed the main hindrance to Ardgour PS pupils being included in the proposed catchment for Acharacle GM school was the distance and associated cost of travel. The proposal suggests that 15 miles is deemed the furthest appropriate distance for primary pupils to travel.

Ardgour CC would consider the lack of the right to free transport to Acharacle PS (APS), a serious reduction in parental choice. The CC consider that parents in Ardgour should be given the opportunity to access either APS or Bun Sgoil Gaidhig Loch Abair (BSGL) with equitable provision to free transport and also with equitable provision as the other peninsula schools in the Ardnamurchan HS Catchment. Following the HC Gaelic Language Policy, we should be encouraging young people to stay within their own communities and develop bi-lingual skills. It is recognised by the CC that pupils who attend BSGL are more likely to follow secondary education through to LHS encouraging our young people to leave the area in which they live. The gaelic provision at Ardnamurchan High School and at Acharacle GME is recognised as being of a very high standard and brings young people across the peninsula together in a way that was not happening previously.

Points raised at our recent meeting included:

1. During previous historical communications with Area Manager (West) concerning the proposal to dual Lochaline Primary School and Ardgour Primary School, it was stressed that linking a school within the Ardnamurchan ASG was of primary importance in maintaining the specific nature of the peninsula culture, ethos and heritage. This statement was made during discussion on why it would be considered inappropriate to link Ardgour PS with a primary in the Onich/Balachulish area.
2. Following the decision of some parents in the Achaphubuil Primary school catchment area to remove their children to Banavie which eventually led to mothballing of Achaphubuil Primary, Highland Council was happy to provide transport to Banavie PS which is a greater distance than 15 miles. Please note that the distance to Ardgour PS for Achaphubuil residents and communities further west is less than 15 miles.
3. A further point on distance is that the furthest outreach of the Ardgour PS catchment is 5 miles from Acharacle PS and, whereas the majority of Ardgour PS pupils come from the Ardgour and Clovullin areas, this would only mean an additional 5 miles to the arbitrary 15.

We have an amazing educational provision on the peninsula, including excellent GM provision at primary and secondary levels and would not wish to see this undermined by the exclusion of Ardgour PS pupils from the catchment for Acharacle GM school and potentially Ardnamurchan High School.

We request parity for GME provision for Ardgour and Lochaline with the other 3 peninsula schools and that they should be included within the catchment area for Acharacle GME Unit.

Kind regards,  
Claire Bennett-Levy  
Secretary  
Ardgour Community Council  
[secretary.ardgourcc@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.ardgourcc@gmail.com)

JM Whannel, Stiùiriche Foghlaim / Director of Gaelic Education, Bòrd na Gàidhlig

7mh là dhen Dàmhair 2021 / 7th October 2021

<b>Freagairt Bhòrd na Gàidhlig airson Co-chomhairleachadh air Sgìre-sgoile airson Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig ann an Àth Tharracail aig Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd</b>	<b>Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Response on the Highland Council Consultation on GME Catchment Area for Acharacle.</b>
<p><b>1. Ro-ràdh</b></p> <p>Tha Bòrd na Gàidhlig a' cur fàilte air an iomairt gus sgìre-sgoile a chur air bhonn airson Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig ann an sgìre Àth Tharracail. Tha am Bòrd ag aithneachadh gu bheil Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd a' gluasad gu sgìrean-sgoile airson FtG a stèidheachadh air feadh sgìre na Comhairle.</p> <p>Tha Am Plana Cànan Nàiseanta Gàidhlig 2018-23 agus an Stiùireadh Reachdail airson Foghlam Gàidhlig mar bhunait airson na freagairt seo. San Stiùireadh Reachdail, far a bheil barrachd mìneachaidh air na ceumannan seo, 's e bunait na cùise gun bu chòir adhartas is fàs a bhith air Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig.</p>	<p><b>1. Introduction</b></p> <p>Bòrd na Gàidhlig welcomes the initiative to establish a school catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in the Acharacle 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>

## 2. Fiosrachadh sa Cho-chomhairleachadh

Tha Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd ag ràdh gu bheil iad airson sgìre-sgoile a stèidheachadh airson nan adhbharan a leanas:

- 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 còmhdhail taobh a-staigh sgìre a tha reusanta agus gu h-àbhaisteach tha seo a' ciallachadh nas lugha de 15 mìltean airson 'turas gu sgoil'.

## 2. Consultation Information

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

- The Statutory Guidance recommends that one be developed;
- There is lack of clarity for parents about the entitlement to GME for their children; and
- The Council has used the practice of providing transport within a reasonable travelling distance and generally this has been understood to mean within 15 miles of the school.

## 3. Molaidhean na Comhairle

Tha sinn a' toirt fa-near do na rudan a leanas ann am moladh Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd:

- Tha solar àrd-sgoile FtG air a thoirt seachad ann an Àrd-sgoil Àird nam Murchan airson sgoilearan anns an sgìre-sgoile a tha san amharc airson FtG sa bhun-sgoil. Chaidh aire a thoirt air solarachadh FtG san Àrd-sgoil taobh a-staigh a' mholaidh a' sealltainn lèirsinn airson FtG thar Bun-sgoil is Àrd-sgoil.
- Chaidh fiosrachadh mionaideach a thoirt seachad a thaobh rèiteachaidhean còmhdhail iomchaidh agus tha sinn a' toirt fa-near gu bheilear a' gabhail a-steach Cille Chòmhain agus tha sinn a' toirt fa-near dhan reusanachadh air cùl a' cho-dhùnaidh a bhith a' gabhail a-steach na cloinne sin a bhiodh mar as trice air am meas ro fhada bhon t-seirbheis FtG. Tha sinn a' toirt fa-near ge-tà gu bheilear a' meas gum biodh ùine siubhail de 51 mionaid eadar Cille Chòmhain agus Àth Tharracail agus ged a tha sinn riarachtaiche gum bi an rèiteachadh a chaidh a mholadh iomchaidh an-dràsta, tha sinn a' cur ìmpidh air an Ùghdarras Ionadail beachdachadh air solar FtG ùr a stèidheachadh ann am Bun-sgoil Cille Chòmhain. Leis cho soirbheachail 's a tha

## 3. Council Recommendation

In the proposal from Highland Council, we note the following:

- GME Secondary provision is provided at Ardnamurchan High School for pupils in the proposed primary GME catchment. The provision of Secondary GME has been taken into account within the proposal displaying a vision for GME across Primary and Secondary.
- Detailed information has been provided regarding appropriate transport arrangements and we note the inclusion of Kilchoan and the reasoning behind the decision to include these children who would normally be judged as too distant from the GME service. We note however the travelling time estimate of 51 minutes between Kilchoan and Acharacle and whilst we are satisfied that the proposed arrangement will be adequate at present, we would urge the Local Authority to consider the merits of new GME provision at Kilchoan Primary School. Given the enormous success of GME in Acharacle where 70% of the pupils in Acharacle Primary are now in GME there is clear evidence of growing and sustained uptake of GME in the area.



<p>FtG ann an Àth Tharracail far a bheil 70% de na sgoilearan ann am Bun-sgoil Àth Tharracail a-nis ann an FtG tha fianais shoilleir ann gu bheil FtG a' sior fhàs san sgìre.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tha sinn a' toirt fa-near nach deach Bun-sgoiltean Àird Ghobhair agus Loch Àlainn a thoirt a-steach dhan sgìre-sgoile airson adhbharan iomchaidh co-cheangailte ri ùine siubhail. Mholamaid gun dèan an t-Ùghdarras Ionadail conaltradh leis a' choimhearsnachd a thaobh solar FtG ann an Àird Ghobhair agus Loch Àlainn. Tha sinn mothachail gun deach an cuspair seo a thogail aig a' choinneimh phoblaich air 29mh dhen t-Sultain agus mholamaid gun cruthaich an t-Ùghdarras plana le clàr-ama airson FtG a thoirt a-steach ann an Àird Ghobhair agus Loch Àlainn.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We note that Ardgour and Lochaline Primaries have not been included within the catchment for appropriate reasons relating to travelling time. We would urge the Local Authority to engage now with community regarding GME provision in Ardgour and Lochaline. We note that this issue was raised at the public meeting on the consultation on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September and would urge to Authority to develop a timed plan for introducing GME in Ardgour and Lochaline.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Stiùireadh Reachdail airson Foghlam Gàidhlig</b></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><b>Sgìrean-sgoile FtG is Stiùireadh airson Àiteachan a Ghlèidheadh do Sgoilearan</b></p> <p>Bu chòir do dh'ùghdarrasan foghlaim sgìrean-sgoile a stèidheachadh airson FtG, agus dh'fhaodadh gum bu mhiann leotha beachdachadh air an iarrtas a th' ann airson FtG nuair a bhios iad a' stèidheachadh stiùireadh airson nan àiteachan a thèid a ghlèidheadh do sgoilearan ann am FtG.</p> <p><b>A rèir 2.54:</b></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 coltas a bhith air an sgìre sin gun tèid 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 Àth Tharracail far a bheil solar FtG ann.</p>	<p><b>4. Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education</b></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 &amp; 2.54).</p> <p><b>GME Catchment Areas and Placing Guidelines</b></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><b>2.54 states:</b></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 Acharacle Primary School where there is GME provision.</p>



## **Gaelic Medium catchment area for Acharacle Primary School**

Comann nam Pàrant welcomes the formalisation of a school catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education (GME) for Acharacle Primary School.

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. The majority of pupils in Acharacle Primary are already in GME and this is extremely encouraging.

Although we agree with the setting of the catchment, we welcome the assurance in the introduction to the proposal that, 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, Highland Council will follow the process for requests as set out in Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education.

M. Wentworth  
8 Dàmhair 2021

> Sir,

> Thank you for the opportunity to take part in the consultation on the catchment area for the Acharacle Gaelic Medium unit(GMU)

>

> The Acharacle GMU is a tremendous success and a real credit to the staff, pupils, parents and the wider community, as now two thirds of the pupils in the Primary School are in the Gaelic stream. The early years, from the Nursery to P2, are all in the Gaelic classes.

>

> I want to add my voice to those who wish to see both Ardgour and Lochaline included within the catchment area.

>

> Ardgour primary school is only 5 miles outwith the suggested catchment area, with most of their pupils within walking distance of the primary school. The suggested maximum distance of 15 miles is arbitrary-my own sons traveled 22 miles to access GME.

>

> In the future, it would be all but impossible to establish a new GMU in either Ardgour or Lochaline as the threshold requires 4-5 pupils requesting GME in these tiny primary schools. After opening the Acharacle GMU 30 years ago, we tried and failed to establish GMUs in both Lochaline and Ardgour primary schools when their school roll was significantly greater. For HC to provide the opportunity to access GME for the Ardnamurchan and Morvern peninsulas requires Ardgour, Strontian, Lochaline and Kilchoan to be within the catchment area. The substantial Gaelic Specific Grant to HC, as well as support from BnG, should provide the funding for the necessary transport.

>

> The current HC Gaelic Language Plan has a target of increasing the number of pupils in GME to 10% by 2023. Enrolment in 20/21 stands at only 6.8%. Including Ardgour and Lochaline in the catchment area will assist in the HC reaching their target. The active promotion of the educational and cognitive benefits of bilingual education would help HC to reach their target.

>

> Finally, there is the remote and rural ethos of the Ardnamurchan and Morvern peninsulas with the pupils from all 5 primary schools attending Ardnamurchan High School. It has an excellent Gaelic dept with 3 teachers and a wide range of subjects available through GM. Both Ardgour and Lochaline are a part of that ethos.

> Thanks and regards,

> Dr Michael Foxley.

> 2, Achaphubuil, Ardgour.

Dear Ian

I write to formally re-iterate and expand on my comments made at the public meeting on the above held on 29 September. I do so as a parent of 4 children, all of whom have been through pre-school and primary education in Strontian.

I support the establishment of the catchment as proposed subject to the following qualifications:

- That, as stated on page 1 of the proposal paper, it remains open for other primary schools in the area to receive Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in the future - and that the presence of the catchment area is not used subsequently to argue against this;
- That flexibility is shown to pupils outwith the proposed catchment area to ensure they are assisted in accessing GME within the peninsulas, rather than being 'lost' to Fort William or Mull (and subsequently from Ardnamurchan High School);
- That it is recognised that a catchment area for Acharacle is only an acceptable solution short-term, and that the real opportunity lies in expanding GME provision to other primary schools within the Associated School Group.

With respect to the last of these, I would make the following further observations:

- The Education Scotland Act (2016) – and the slightly more flexible Highland Council policy deriving from it – are fundamentally flawed, in respect of assessment requests for GME. Setting a threshold of 4 or 5 pupils before an assessment can be made discriminates against small, rural primary schools, where this annual number of pupils overall is rarely if ever achieved. Thus the very areas with the closest links to Gaelic as a community language are being prevented from accessing GME. Highland Council, through both officers and elected members, needs to address this issue and also raise it with Scottish Government.
- Paragraph 1.1 of the proposal references the statutory duty “to promote and support Gaelic Medium education and learning” of education authorities. This is welcome and it is hoped will be adhered to. However, it is important to contrast this with the reality, through my own ‘lived experience’ in Strontian:  
During the 17 year period when I had children in nursery and/or primary school, I cannot recall a single instance of such promotion of GME – and as a strong supporter, it is most unlikely I would have forgotten. Not once did Highland Council provide information to parents, through distribution of leaflets, letters home in school bags, organising parent or community meetings etc  
It is hard not to conclude from this that HC is not in fact committed to expanding the geographical coverage of GME, and indeed the evidence on the ground seems to bear this out – there are actually fewer GME primary schools in the HC area now than there were 10 years ago (2011-12). [*Bòrd na Gàidhlig data*]

Regards

Jamie



**Name of consultation:** Acharacle Gaelic Medium

**Your comments:** I would like to add my support to the comments made in relation to the potential impact on Ardnamurchan High School should the proposal to formalise the Acharacle GM catchment area go ahead. Acharacle's catchment area is within Ardnamurchan High school's catchment area and therefore any changes to Acharacle's boundaries will impact on AHS.

As was highlighted, if the invitation to establish GM provision is taken up by parents from Lochaline or Ardgour, (and if for any one of several reasons they are unable to have GME provided for their children on their own premises), they will therefore be obliged to send their children to BSGL, as the only viable option open to them. It is natural therefore, having been primary schooled in BSGL that these children will proceed to Àrd-sgoil Lochabar for their secondary schooling.

Any leakage of pupils, in this case, GM pupils from Lochaline or Ardgour primaries who would previously have fed onto AHS, will almost certainly have a detrimental effect on AHS as a whole. Not least, the potential loss of teaching staff or teachers' hours due to a reduction in school roll.

It is also worth noting however, that a reduction in GM pupils and hence staff, will not only impact on GME but also on the whole-school experience of both EM and GM pupils alike. This issue therefore is not just of concern to parents of GM pupils whose cohort numbers will naturally be reduced (not a great model for encouraging increased language use between peers), but for all future parents who are seeking quality education and the best all-round experience for their children at Àrd-sgoil Àird nam Murchain.

Hi Ian,

So my reason for asking for the data in the first place, is without knowing the demand for this, how can you make the statement in 9.1. You don't know how many parents (current or future) are likely to take their children out of Strontian Primary and therefore can't say with any certainty what effect it is going have on the school roll and consequently the staff and staffing level.

Yes please can you pass on this whole correspondence.

Many thanks.

Jamie

Jamie Tait

Sent from my iPhone

On 16 Nov 2021, at 16:38, Education Consultations <[Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk)> wrote:

Dear Jamie,

Thanks for your further email. I know the Inspector and her admin assistant so could forward your email to them, if you would find that helpful?

You are correct that this proposed change is not based on any demand made by the parent body of Strontian. The catchment is being created because of Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education issued by Bòrd na Gàidhlig, who act as the agent of the Scottish Government on matters relating to the Gaelic language. The Statutory Guidance requires that education authorities set up Gaelic Medium catchment areas for schools that offer Gaelic medium education. What is up for debate of course, is the extent of the catchment to be created.

Ian Jackson  
Education Officer  
Highland Council  
07435 982557

**From:** Jamie Tait <[jamie.tait@me.com](mailto:jamie.tait@me.com)>

**Sent:** 16 November 2021 15:26

**To:** Education Consultations <[Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk)>

**Cc:** Andrew Baxter - Member <[andrew@lochabervoice.com](mailto:andrew@lochabervoice.com)>; Christopher Millar-Craig (Education) <[christopher.millar-craig@highland.gov.uk](mailto:christopher.millar-craig@highland.gov.uk)>; Rachel Patterson (Education)

<[rachel.patterson@highland.gov.uk](mailto:rachel.patterson@highland.gov.uk)>; Patricia Kennedy (Education)

<[patricia.kennedy@highland.gov.uk](mailto:patricia.kennedy@highland.gov.uk)>; Don Esson (Education) <[Don.Esson@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Don.Esson@highland.gov.uk)>; Brian Porter (Support Services) <[Brian.Porter@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Brian.Porter@highland.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** Re: The proposal is to establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Acharacle Primary School

**CAUTION:** This email was sent from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Ian,

Thank you for your. On your final point we have received an email only today, stating that they would be accepting comments until tomorrow ( Wednesday 17th Nov) but no contact details were given, so I used the only one I could find in the past correspondence.

On your general reply to my query, I take it that this proposed change is not then based on any demand made by the parent body of Strontian, since you don't appear to have any survey data from them. Is this the case?

Kind Regards

Jamie

Jamie Tait

Sent from my iPhone

On 16 Nov 2021, at 14:51, Education Consultations <[Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk)> wrote:

Dear Jamie

Thank you for your email below, submitted to the Education Consultations inbox of Highland Council.

As I am sure you know, there is an existing "custom and practice" arrangement under which pupils from the Strontian PS catchment can attend Gaelic Medium Education (GME) at Acharacle PS, and at the present time a small number of pupils from the Strontian PS catchment do exactly that. As the Proposal simply formalises that existing arrangement, we don't see that, in itself, it is likely to have a significant impact on current patterns of enrolment within the primary schools of the Ardnamurchan Associated School Group (ASG).

It is *possible*, of course, that the mere creation of a defined catchment will encourage more parents from the Strontian PS area to take up the opportunity of accessing GME in Acharacle PS for their children. So far, Highland Council has created 11 Gaelic Medium catchment areas and in most of these, the new GM catchment overlays several English Medium catchments, as has been proposed for Acharacle. However, in none of these have we seen any significant shifts in patterns of enrolment from before and after the creation of the catchment. The travel time between Strontian and Acharacle will clearly be a factor for any parent in the Strontian school catchment who is considering enrolling their child in Acharacle PS. I appreciate of course that some of the houses in the Strontian catchment are closer to Acharacle than is Strontian itself, but conversely, others are further away.

We believe the chances of any impact on Ardnamurchan High School itself are exceedingly small. The Proposal set out the Council's view that two primary school catchments within the ASG,

Lochaline and Ardgour, should be left out of the Acharacle GM catchment on grounds of distance, travel time and cost. It has been argued that excluding the Ardgour catchment might encourage children from the area to instead access GME from the Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar in Fort William. In the 21 years I have worked for Highland Council only 3 children from the Ardgour area have ever done so, all of whom are now well past school age. Two of the children subsequently attended Ardnamurchan High School in any case.

We have received a number of representations arguing that Ardgour PS should be included within the proposed GM catchment, and are currently considering these.

In answer to your specific question, we cannot of course *guarantee* that there will be no impact on the roll and staffing of the Ardnamurchan 3-18 Group, and the Proposal Paper offers no claim to that effect. I hope though, that the above provides further details on why we do not *expect* any significant impact on the roll of any school within the ASG, or any impact on staffing.

I'm not sure whether it is your intention to submit a formal response to the consultation exercise. If so, I must highlight that the public consultation period closed on 8 October. You are of course free to make whatever representations you wish, but the date of submission would be highlighted in our report reviewing the consultation exercise.

I'm aware that Education Scotland are currently carrying out their assessment of the merits of the Council's Proposal, and their report will doubtless take account of any views given to them by parents.

## **Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010**

**Report by HM Inspectors of Education addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The Highland Council to establish a Gaelic Medium Education catchment area for Acharacle Primary School. This new catchment will overlay the current English Medium catchments of Acharacle Primary School, Strontian Primary School and Kilchoan Primary School.**

**The proposal also formalises the current arrangements relating to Gaelic Medium Education in Ardnamurchan High School, under which the catchment area for Ardnamurchan High School will apply to both Gaelic Medium and English Medium Education.**

November 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 catchment areas for Gaelic Medium Education. 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 2010 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 29 September 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
- virtual 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](#). The formal consultation ran from 23 August 2021 to 8 October 2021. The proposal paper was distributed to a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties. Interested parties were invited to respond to the statutory consultation by letter or electronically. This attracted eight responses. Bòrd na Gàidhlig as a statutory consultee supported the proposals. They asked that the council have a clear plan for introducing Gaelic Medium Education at Ardgour and Lochaline Primary Schools, based on parental interest. Comann nam Pàrant recognised that the proposal had potential to attract parents to Gaelic Medium Education. They stated that this is not equivalent to Gaelic Medium Education being available in each locality. Children and young people's views at the primary stages were sought. This included children who learnt through Gaelic and English. They expressed their passion for learning the language and were clear of the resulting benefits. Across English and Gaelic Medium Education, children spoke of long travel distances to school and the impact of road conditions on

that travel. Children were clear that Gaelic Medium Education should be available to those who wished to choose this pathway in Scottish education. Those in English Medium Education recognised the value of their learning of Gaelic as an additional language.

2.2 The council hosted a virtual public meeting. Officers set a rationale for the proposals, discussed high-level educational benefits and invited attendee views. There were 18 in attendance at this meeting. Attendees' concerns centred on:

- legislation for setting up new Gaelic Medium provisions;
- promotion to parents of Gaelic Medium Education;
- the area of the proposed Gaelic Medium catchment; and
- how the proposal helps the council to meet their target to increase the number of young people in Gaelic Medium Education.

2.3 Additional collective themes raised across written and oral responses are:

- all primaries of the Ardnamurchan associated school group being included in the catchment area;
- setting up of new provisions for Gaelic Medium Education; and
- sustaining education in a rural area.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 This proposal by The Highland Council, if agreed, formalises the existing catchment area for Ardnamurchan High School as also applying to Gaelic Medium Education. This covers a rural area. The distances to travel necessitate accommodation away from home for some young people at the secondary stages during the week. There is one nursery and one primary provision for Gaelic Medium Education within the associated school group for Ardnamurchan High School. These are based at Acharacle Primary School. The proposal suggests that the Acharacle Primary School's existing catchment area is extended to include that of Strontian Primary School and Kilchoan Primary School. This would form a catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education. This leaves two associated primary schools out with the proposed catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education. These are Lochaline and Ardgour Primary Schools. The council's discretion for not including all of the schools is that children would have to travel long distances. A majority of stakeholders who engaged with this consultation agreed with how the council had included only some primary schools within the proposed catchment areas. However, there are a number of ways that the council can reduce possible adverse effects.

3.2 HM Inspectors are of the view that there are equity and equality issues that should inform the council's future strategic planning, should the proposal be progressed. Almost all stakeholders are very positive about the growth of Gaelic Medium Education within the associated school group. The nursery provision is wholly delivered through Gaelic at this time. This is based on parental demand. Most children at Acharacle Primary School are opting to learn through Gaelic. Specialists at the secondary school are increasing ways for young people to learn through Gaelic. The council should analyse the factors underpinning these successes to support further growth of Gaelic in the associated school group. This may help to ensure that all parents within this associated school group, who wish to access Gaelic Medium Education, are enabled to do so. At the public meeting, possible interest in setting up a Gaelic Medium Education provision at Lochaline Primary School was expressed by parents. The council has stated that they will

investigate this further. They should also provide reassurances on how they will reduce potential barriers to 'at least five children' being required to set up a new Gaelic Medium Education, as stated in statutory guidance. The required number of children is reported as not being feasible or achievable in this rural area. Whilst there is a process laid out in legislation, the local authority themselves can initiate new Gaelic Medium provisions where interest exists. In so doing, they should take account of rural contexts. A view was expressed that much more could be done to promote Gaelic Medium Education with parents on a regular and robust way. This is a statutory duty.

3.3 Senior leaders within the associated school group are very aware of the local and rural contexts of their schools. They talked about embedding a vision for an 'Ardnamurchan identity'. Along with a few others, their desire was to not lose potential pupils from Ardgour Primary School through placing requests to other schools. In the final report, the council should be clearer on how they will reduce barriers to future requests from parents for Gaelic Medium Education at Lochaline and Ardgour Primary Schools. This should include addressing barriers such as transport costs and smaller pupil rolls as may be part of rural education. The council should also be clear on how their proposal supports the expansion of funded free hours being available through Gaelic for children aged three to five years. The educational benefit statement should include how the proposal is going to help the council meet their Gaelic language plan targets for the secondary stages. This is as part of a progressive 3-18 immersion curriculum.

3.4 For some children learning through English, equity translates to them having access to quality and progressive learning of Gaelic as an additional language. This pathway also makes an important contribution to meeting targets for the council's planning for Gaelic. It is also integral to the 'Ardnamurchan identity'. The educational benefit statement should include how all children and young people in English Medium can learn Gaelic regularly and progressively as a means to promote equity. In doing this, there should be clarity on the different outcomes from Gaelic (Learners) and Gaelic Medium Education.

3.5 The council's final report, should the proposal go ahead, needs to include arrangements for duty of care and safeguarding for children making long journeys on buses to access Gaelic Medium Education.

## 4. Summary

HM Inspectors have considered The Highland Council's proposal to establish catchment areas for Gaelic Medium Education at Ardnamurchan High School and Acharacle Primary School. HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has potential to result in educational benefits. However, there are a few aspects of the proposal still to be considered. This is to ensure that all learners progressing to Ardnamurchan High School have equity and equality in their learning of and through Gaelic. In its final report, the council needs to make clear how parents make future requests for establishing further Gaelic Medium Education as set out in the Education (Scotland) Act 2016. They should do so with a particular regard to rural areas. They also need to mitigate against potential future equity barriers, such as transport costs and access to early learning and childcare through Gaelic. These may prevent parents making placing requests for Gaelic Medium Education. The council should have a clear strategy to promote the benefits and opportunities for Gaelic Medium Education in an ongoing, robust way. They should also provide more detail on how children will travel safely during long journeys.

**HM Inspectors  
November 2021**



## **Achd Sgoiltean (Co-chomhairleachadh) (Alba) 2010**

**Aithisg le Luchd-sgrùdaidh Foghlaim na Banrigh a' dèiligeadh ri taobhan foghlaim den mholadh le Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd gus sgìre-fhoghlaim Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig a stèidheachadh airson Bun-sgoil Àth Tharracail. Gabhaidh an sgìre-fhoghlaim ùr seo thairis na sgìrean-foghlaim tro mheadhan na Beurla ann am Bun-sgoil Àth Tharracail, Bun-sgoil Shròn an t-Sìthein agus Bun-sgoil Chille Chòmhain.**

**Tha am moladh seo cuideachd a' stèidheachadh na sgìre-foghlaim a tha ann an-dràsta airson Àrd-sgoil Àird nam Murchan far am bi an sgìre-foghlaim airson Àrd-sgoil Àird nam Murchan a' buntainn ri Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig agus na Beurla.**

An t-Samhain 2021

## 1. Ro-ràdh

1.1 Chaidh an aithisg seo bho Fhoghlam Alba ullachadh le Luchd-sgrùdaidh Foghlaim na Banrigh (Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh) ann an co-rèir ri teirmichean [Achd Sgoiltean \(Co-chomhairleachadh\) \(Alba\) 2010](#) (“Achd 2010”). S e adhbhar na h-aithisg seo beachdachadh neo-eisimeileach agus neo-phàirteach a libhrigeadh air moladh Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd gus sgìrean-foghlaim a stèidheachadh airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig. Tha mion-fhiosrachadh goirid ann an Roinn 2 na h-aithisge air a’ phròiseas chonaltraidh. Tha Roinn 3 na h-aithisge ag innse beachdachadh Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh air taobhan foghlaim a’ mholaidh, a’ gabhail a-steach beachdan cudromach aig luchd-comhairle. Tha Roinn 4 a’ toirt geàrr-chunntas air àrd-shealladh Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh air a’ mholadh. Nuair a gheibhear an aithisg seo, tha Achd 2010 ag òrdachadh gum bi a’ chomhairle a’ beachdachadh air agus an uair sin ag ullachadh aithisg co-chomhairleachaidh dheireannach. Bu chòir gum bi an aithisg seo an lùib aithisg co-chomhairleachaidh dheireannach na comhairle, còmhla ri mìneachadh air ciamar, ann an crìoch a chur air a’ mholadh, a rinneadh ath-sgrùdadh air a’ chiad mholadh, a’ gabhail a-steach geàrr-chunntas air puingeann a chaidh a thogail anns a’ phròiseas chonaltraidh agus freagairt na comhairle riutha. Feumaidh a’ chomhairle an aithisg co-chomhairleachaidh dheireannach aca fhoillseachadh trì seachdainean mus gabh iad an co-dhùnadh mu dheireadh.

1.2 Bheachdaich Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh air:

- na buaidhean a dh’fhaodadh a bhith aig a’ mholadh air clann agus òganaich sna sgoiltean; agus luchd-cleachdaidh sam bith eile; clann a bhios nan sgoilearan taobh a-staigh dà bhliadhna bho chaidh am pàipear molaidh fhoillseachadh; agus clann agus òganaich eile ann an sgìre na comhairle;
- buaidhean coltach sam bith eile aig a’ mholadh;
- ciamar a tha a’ chomhairle an dùil a bhith a’ lùghdachadh no a’ seachnadh bhuidhean dona sam bith a dh’fhaodadh tighinn am bàrr bhon mholadh; agus
- na buannachdan foghlaim a tha a’ chomhairle an dùil a thig bho thoirt gu buil a’ mholaidh, agus adhbharan na comhairle airson nam beachdan seo a ruigsinn.

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

- làthaireachd aig a’ choinneimh phoblaich bhiortual air a chumail air 29 Sultain 2021 a thaobh molaidhean na comhairle;
- beachdachadh air a h-uile sgrìobhainn iomchaidh a chaidh a sholarachadh leis a’ chomhairle a thaobh a’ mholaidh, gu sònraichte aithris nan sochairean foghlaim agus sgrìobhainnean co-chomhairleachaidh ceangailte, freagairtean sgrìobhte agus labhairteach bho phàrantan is eile; agus
- beachdachadh bhiortual le luchd-comhairle buntainneach.

## 2. Pròiseas Co-chomhairleachaidh

2.1 Ghabh Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd os làimh co-chomhairleachadh air a’ mholadh/na molaidhean aca a thaobh [Achd Sgoiltean \(Co-chomhairleachadh\) \(Alba\) 2010](#). Ruith an co-chomhairleachadh foirmeil bho 23 Lùnastal 2021 gu 8 Dàmhair 2021. Chaidh am pàipear molaidh a sgaoileadh gu raon farsaing de luchd-ùidhe agus daoine le com-pàirt sa chùis. Chaidh cuireadh a thoirt do luchd-compàirt freagairt a thoirt don cho-chomhairleachadh reachdail le litir no gu dealanach. Fhuaras ochd freagairtean. Chuir Bòrd na Gàidhlig mar chomhairliche reachdail taic ris na molaidhean. Dh’iarr iad gum biodh plana soilleir aig a’ chomhairle airson Foghlam Meadhan

Gàidhlig a thòiseachadh aig Bun-sgoiltean Àird Ghobhar agus Loch Àlainn, stèidhichte air ùidh phàrantan. Thug Comann nam Pàrant fa-near gum faodadh am moladh pàrantan a thàladh gu Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig. Thuir iad nach eil seo co-ionann ri Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig a bhith ri fhaighinn anns gach sgìre. Chaidh beachdan chloinne agus dhaoine òga aig ìre na bun-sgoile a shireadh. Bha seo a' toirt a-steach clann a dh'ionnsaich tron Ghàidhlig agus tron Bheurla. Chuir iad an cèill an dealas airson a bhith ag ionnsachadh a' chànain agus bha iad soilleir mu na buannachdan a thàinig às. Air feadh Foghlam Meadhan Beurla agus Gàidhlig, bhruidhinn clann air astar siubhail fada don sgoil agus buaidh suidheachadh nan rathaidean air an t-siubhal sin. Bha clann soilleir gum bu chòir Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig a bhith ri fhaighinn dhaibhsan a bha airson an t-slighe seo a thaghadh ann am foghlam na h-Alba. Dh'aithnich an fheadhainn ann am Foghlam Meadhan Beurla an luach a bhith ag ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig mar chànain a bharrachd.

2.2 Chùm a' chomhairle coinneamh phoblach bhiortual. Stèidhich oifigearan feallsanachd airson nam molaidhean, bheachdaich iad air àrd-bhuannachdan foghlaim agus dh'iarr iad beachdan bhon luchd-frithealaidh. Bha 18 an làthair aig a' choinneimh seo. Bha dragh aig luchd-frithealaidh mu:

- reachdas airson a bhith a' stèidheachadh solar ùr Foghlam Meadhan-Ghàidhlig;
- cur air adhart Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig do phàrantan;
- farsaingeachd na sgìre-foghlaim Meadhan-Ghàidhlig; agus
- mar a chuidicheadh am moladh a' chomhairle gus an targaid aca a choileanadh airson na h-àireimh de dhaoine òga ann am Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig a mheudachadh.

2.3 Is iad na cuspairean a thogadh ann am freagairtean sgrìobhte agus labhairteach:

- a h-uile bun-sgoil de bhuidhinn-sgoile cho-cheangailte Àird nam Murchan a bhith air a ghabhail a-steach don sgìre-fhoghlaim;
- stèidheachadh solar ùr airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig; agus
- cumail suas foghlam ann an sgìre dhùthchail.

### 3. Taobhan foghlaim a' mholaidh

3.1 Tha am moladh seo le Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd, ma thèid aontachadh, a' foirmealachadh na sgìre-foghlaim a tha ann an-dràsta airson Àrd-sgoil Àird nam Murchan mar a bhith a' buntainn ri Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig cuideachd. Tha seo a' còmhdach sgìre dhùthchail. Feumaidh cuid de dhaoine òga aig ìrean àrd-sgoile àite-fuirich air falbh bhon dachaigh tron t-seachdain air sgàth an astar siubhail. Tha aon sgoil-àraich agus aon sholar bun-sgoile airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig taobh a-staigh na buidhne-sgoiltean co-cheangailte airson Àrd-sgoil Àird nam Murchan. Tha iad stèidhichte aig Bun-sgoil Àth Tharracail. Thathas a' moladh gun tèid sgìre-fhoghlaim Bun-sgoil Àth Tharracail a leudachadh gu bhith a' toirt a-steach Bun-sgoil Shròn an t-Sithein agus Bun-sgoil Chille Chòmhain. Bhiodh seo na sgìre-foghlaim airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig. Tha seo a' fàgail dà bhun-sgoil taobh a-muigh na sgìre-foghlaim a thathas a' moladh airson Foghlam Meadhan na Gàidhlig. Is iad seo Bun-sgoiltean Loch Àlainn agus Àrd Ghobhar. Is e adhbhar na comhairle gun a bhith a' toirt a-steach nan sgoiltean air fad gum feumadh clann astar fada a shiubhal. Dh'aontaich mòr-chuid de luchd-ùidh a bha an sàs anns a' cho-chomhairleachadh seo leis mar a bha a' chomhairle air dìreach cuid de bhun-sgoiltean a thoirt a-steach do na sgìrean-foghlaim a chaidh a mholadh. Ach, tha grunn dhòighean anns an urrainn don chomhairle droch bhuaidhean a lùghdachadh.

3.2 Tha Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh den bheachd gu bheil cùisean co-ionannachd agus cothromachd ann a bu chòir fiosrachadh a thoirt do dhealbhadh ro-innleachdail na comhairle san àm ri teachd, nan deigheadh am moladh air adhart. Tha cha mhòr a h-uile neach-ùidh gu math dòchasach mu fhàs Foghlaim Meadhan Gàidhlig taobh a-staigh na buidhne-sgoiltean co-cheangailte. Tha solar na sgoil-àraich air a lìbhrigeadh gu h-iomlan tron Ghàidhlig aig an àm seo. Tha seo stèidhichte air iarrtas phàrantan. Tha a' mhòr-chuid de chlann aig Bun-sgoil Àth Tharracail a' roghnachadh ionnsachadh tron Ghàidhlig. Tha eòlaichean-cuspair san àrd-sgoil a' meudachadh dhòighean anns am faod daoine òga ionnsachadh tron Ghàidhlig. Bu chòir don chomhairle mion-sgrùdadh a dhèanamh air adhbharan an t-soirbheachaidh seo gus taic a thoirt do fhàs a bharrachd de Ghàidhlig anns a' bhuidhinn-sgoiltean cho-cheangailte. Dh'fhaodadh seo cuideachadh le bhith a' dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil comas aig a h-uile pàrant taobh a-staigh na buidhne-sgoiltean co-cheangailte seo, a tha airson faighinn gu Foghlam tro Mheadhan na Gàidhlig, sin a dhèanamh. Aig a' choinneimh phoblaich, nochd pàrantan ùidh ann a bhith a' stèidheachadh solar Foghlaim Meadhan Gàidhlig aig Bun-sgoil Loch Àlainn. Tha a' chomhairle air a ràdh gun dèan iad tuilleadh sgrùdaidh air seo. Bu chòir dhaibh cuideachd dearbhadh ciamar a lùghdaicheas iad cnapan-starra a thaobh an riatanais san stiùireadh reachdail gu bheil feum air 'co-dhiù còignear chloinne' a bhith ann gus solar Foghlaim Meadhan Gàidhlig a stèidheachadh. Thathas ag aithris nach eil an àireamh riatanach de chlann so-dhèanta, no comasach a choileanadh san sgìre dhùthchail seo. Ged a tha pròiseas stèidhichte ann an reachdas, faodaidh an t-ùghdarras ionadail fhèin solar ùr Meadhain-Ghàidhlig a thòiseachadh far a bheil ùidh ann. Le bhith a' dèanamh seo, bu chòir dhaibh aire a thoirt do cho-theacsaichean dùthchail. Chaidh beachd a nochdadh gum faoidte mòran a bharrachd a dhèanamh gus Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig a chur air adhart do phàrantan ann an dòigh chunbhalach agus làidir. 'S e dleastanas reachdail a th' ann an seo.

3.3 Tha àrd-stiùirichean taobh a-staigh na buidhne-sgoiltean co-cheangailte gu math mothachail air co-theacsan ionadail agus dùthchail nan sgoiltean aca. Bha iad a' bruidhinn mu bhith a' daingneachadh lèirsinn airson 'dearbh-aithne Àird nam Murchan'. Còmhla ri beagan eile, b' e am miann aca gun a bhith a' call sgoilearan bho Bhun-sgoil Àird nan Gobhar tro bhith a' cur iarrtasan suidheachaidh gu sgoiltean eile. Anns an aithisg dheireannaich, bu chòir don chomhairle a bhith nas soilleire air mar a lùghdaicheas iad cnapan-starra do dh'iarrtasan bho phàrantan san àm ri teachd airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig aig Bun-sgoiltean Loch Àlainn agus Àrd nan Gobhar. Bu chòir seo gabhail a-steach dèiligeadh ri cnapan-starra leithid nan cosgaisean còmhdhail agus an clàr-sgoilearan nas lugha a dh'fhaodadh nochdadh ann am foghlam dùthchail. Bu chòir don chomhairle cuideachd a bhith soilleir air mar a tha am moladh aca a' toirt taic do leudachadh uairean saor an-asgaidh maoinichte a tha rim faighinn tron Ghàidhlig airson clann aois trì gu còig bliadhna. Bu chòir don aithris air buannachd foghlaim a bhith a' toirt a-steach mar a tha am moladh a' dol a chuideachadh na comhairle a' coileanadh targaidean a' phlana Ghàidhlig aca airson nan ìrean àrd-sgoile. Tha seo na phàirt de churraicealam bogaidh leantail each 3-18.

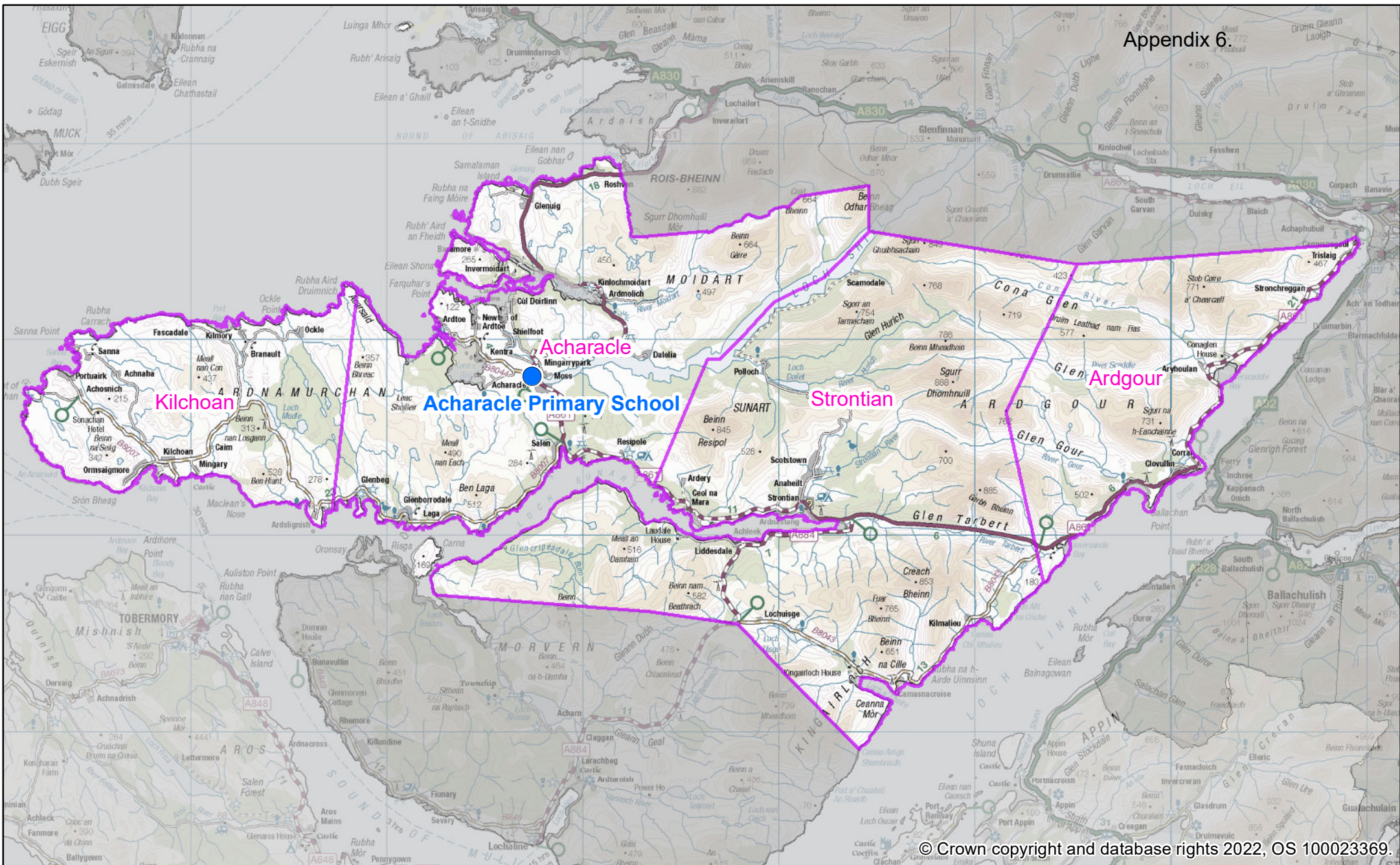
3.4 Airson cuid de chlann a tha ag ionnsachadh tron Bheurla, tha cothromachd a' ciallachadh gu bheil cothrom aca air ionnsachadh leantail each Gàidhlig de dh'àrd-chàileachd mar chànan a bharrachd. Tha an t-slighe seo cuideachd a' cur gu mòr ri bhith a' coileanadh targaidean a thaobh dealbhadh na comhairle airson na Gàidhlig. Tha e cuideachd bunaiteach do 'dhearbh-aithne Àird nam Murchan'. Bu chòir an aithris air buannachd foghlaim a bhith a' toirt a-steach mar as urrainn do chlann is daoine òga ann am Foghlam Meadhan Beurla a bhith ag ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig gu cunbhalach agus gu leantail each mar dhòigh air cothromachd a bhrosnachadh. Ann a bhith a' dèanamh seo, bu chòir soilleireachd a bhith ann mu na diofar bhùilean bho Ghàidhlig (Luchd-ionnsachaidh) agus Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig.

3.5 Feumaidh aithisg dheireannach na comhairle, ma thèid am moladh air adhart, a bhith a' toirt a-steach ullachaidhean airson dleastanas cùraim agus dìon do chlann a tha a' dèanamh thursan fada air busaichean gus faighinn gu Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig.

## 4. Geàrr-chunntas

Tha Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh air beachdachadh air moladh Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd gus sgìrean-foghlaim a stèidheachadh airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig aig Àrd-sgoil Àird nam Murchan agus Bun-sgoil Àth Tharracail. Tha Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh ag aontachadh gu bheil comas aig a' mholadh buannachdan foghlaim a libhrigeadh. Ach, tha pàirtean den mholadh fhathast rim beachdachadh. Tha seo airson dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil cothromachd agus co-ionannachd aig gach neach-ionnsachaidh a tha a' dol air adhart gu Àrd-sgoil Àird nam Murchan san ionnsachadh aca den Ghàidhlig agus tron Ghàidhlig. Anns an aithisg dheireannaich aca, feumaidh a' chomhairle dèanamh soilleir ciamar a nì pàrantan iarrtasan san àm ri teachd airson solar Foghlaim Meadhan Gàidhlig a bharrachd a stèidheachadh, a rèir Achd an Fhoghlaim (Alba) 2016. Bu chòir dhaibh sin a dhèanamh le aire shònraichte do sgìrean dùthchail. Feumaidh iad cuideachd cnapan-starra cothromachd san àm ri teachd a lasachadh, leithid cosgaisean còmhdhail agus ruigsinneachd air tràth-ionnsachadh agus cùram-cloinne tron Ghàidhlig. Dh'fhaodadh sin pàrantan a bhacadh bho iarrtas a chur a-steach airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig. Bu chòir ro-innleachd shoilleir a bhith aig a' chomhairle gus na buannachdan agus na cothroman airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig a chur air adhart ann an dòigh leantainneach, làidir. Bu chòir dhaibh cuideachd barrachd fiosrachaidh a thoirt seachad air mar a shiùbhlas clann gu sàbhailte thar astar fada.

### **Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh An t-Samhain 2021**



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# Proposed Acharacle Primary School Gaelic Medium Catchment

Ref: gis2494  
Date: 12/Jan/2022

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## **THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**

**The proposal is to establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Acharacle 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 Acharacle Primary School. The new catchment will overlay the current English Medium (EM) catchments of Acharacle Primary School, Strontian Primary School, and Kilchoan Primary School.
- To formalise the current arrangements relating to Gàidhlig Medium Education (GME) in Ardnamurchan High School, under which the catchment area for Ardnamurchan 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 Acharacle Primary School will include 3 of the 5 primary school catchments within the Ardnamurchan Associated School Group (ASG). The remaining 2 primary schools are Ardgour Primary School and Lochaline Primary School. The distances and travel times to Acharacle from these 2 schools would make it impractical to include them within the GM catchment.

Any identified parental demand for local provision of GME from within the Ardgour and Lochaline catchments would be assessed in accordance with the Education (Scotland) Act 2016. This process would also apply to the Strontian and Kilchoan catchments, that are included within the proposed GM catchment.

## SUMMARY OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

### PUBLICATION INFORMATION

#### Proposal Paper Published

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

- Acharacle Primary School
- Ardgour Primary School
- Kilchoan Primary School
- Lochaline Primary School
- Ardnamurchan Public Library, Strontian

and published on the Highland Council website:

[www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations](http://www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations)

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

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

To request this information in an alternative format, e.g. large print, Braille, audio formats, or suitable language, please also contact the Business Support Team, Care and Learning Service, Camaghael Hostel, Fort William PH33 7NE  
E-mail: [Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk](mailto: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 Acharacle Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (ii) Parents of pupils attending Ardgour Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (iii) Parents of pupils attending Kilchoan Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (iv) Parents of pupils attending Lochaline Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (v) Parents of pupils attending Strontian Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (vi) Parents of pupils attending Ardnamurchan High School;
- (vii) The Parent Councils of each of the above schools;
- (viii) All 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.

### **Advertisement in Local Media**

A notice announcing the public meeting will be placed in the *Lochaber Times* and on the Highland Council's Facebook page.

### **Consultation Period**

The consultation for this Proposal will run from 23 August 2021 and will end on 8 October 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:

Acharacle Primary School, 29 September 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](mailto:Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk)

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

[www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations](http://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, 8 October 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 15 November 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 3 December 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.

The Council intends to publish its Report early in 2022, prior to submission to the Council’s Education Committee in May 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 area for many of its schools offering GME. This has led to a lack of clarity for parents in respect of entitlement to GME, (see paragraph 2.2 below).
  - Bòrd na Gàidhlig has issued statutory guidance recommending that local authorities create catchment areas for GME.
- 2.2 The current criteria for providing transport to GME in Highland are not particularly well defined, and have evolved over time. The minimum distance and road safety criteria are the same as for English Medium education. The Council currently has an informal arrangement under which transport to GME can be provided “within reasonable travelling distance”. This has been generally interpreted as meaning up to 15 miles, but there are numerous variations.

### **Informal Consultation**

- 3.1 Informal discussions have been held with local elected councillors of Highland Council and with the Head Teachers of (i) Acharacle and Kilchoan Primary Schools, (ii) Ardgour Primary School; (iii) Lochaline Primary School and (iv) Ardnamurchan High and Strontian Primary Schools. 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 Ardnamurchan ASG**

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

### **Acharacle Primary School**

- 5.1 Acharacle Primary is situated within the village of the same name. It has an extensive catchment extending northwards for about 14 miles to Roshven, westwards about 14 miles almost to Ardslignish, and eastwards about 6 miles to past Resipole. There are presently 50 pupils in P1-7, 35 in GM and 15 in English Medium. There are also 13 children in the Gaelic Medium Nursery. The school has excellent accommodation with well-sized classrooms, a large hall/theatre with bleacher seating, a dining room, medical room and designated nursery facility. The building also contains a community facility used by the local Feis (Fèis nan Garbh Crìochan). Both English and Gaelic Medium nursery classes are integral within the school building.
- 5.2 Of the 35 GM pupils at present, all but two are from within the Acharacle Primary catchment itself.

### **Proposed School Catchments for GME**

- 6.1 There are 4 other primary schools within the Ardnamurchan ASG. Approximate travel distances and times to Acharacle Primary from the other schools are set out below:
- Ardgour Primary – Acharacle Primary – 25.8 miles, 47 minutes travel time.
- Kilchoan Primary – Acharacle Primary – 21.9 miles, 51 minutes travel time.
- Lochaline Primary – Acharacle Primary – 32.4 miles, 61 minutes travel time.
- Strontian Primary – Acharacle Primary – 12.5 miles, 29 minutes travel time.
- 6.2 It should be noted though, that each of the schools in the ASG has a wide catchment area, and travel from the furthest ends of each catchment will be considerably longer than the distances and times given above.

- 6.3 The statutory guidance specifies that a catchment area for GME provision should be an area in which the education authority thinks it is reasonable for pupils wishing to receive GME provision to travel to school, and should have the potential to attract parents to choose GME provision for their children.
- 6.4 The Council is sympathetic to the idea that Gàidhlig Medium Education should be accessible as many pupils Highland as possible, provided it is practical and reasonable to provide access.
- 6.5 The village of Strontian is within the informal 15 mile limit that has previously been applied in respect of transport to GME, and it is therefore proposed that the Strontian Primary School catchment should be included within the proposed GM catchment.
- 6.6 The distances involved in travelling to Acharacle from communities in the Kilchoan PS catchment would normally mean that this area would not be included within the GM catchment. However, there is an existing bus service from Kilchoan to Acharacle that would be suitable for any pupils wishing to attend GME. The Council therefore proposes that school transport to GME at Acharacle Primary will be available on the basis of utilising the existing public transport between Kilchoan and Acharacle.
- 6.7 No current transport exists that would allow transport to Acharacle PS from Ardgour or Lochaline. As advised above, these communities are located at a considerable distance from Acharacle, and school transport could only be provided at disproportionate cost. For these reasons, the Council proposes that the Ardgour and Lochaline catchments are excluded from the proposed GM catchment.
- 6.8 The map at **Appendix B** shows the proposed GM catchment.
- 6.9 No changes are proposed for these catchments in respect of English Medium education.
- 6.10 For the purposes of GME, the Ardnamurchan 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.

- 7.3 It is acknowledged that bilingualism has educational benefits as it provides the user with a better sense of the structure of language, and bilingual children often find it easier to pick up other languages. The continued availability of Gaelic medium education at Acharacle Primary School, as evidenced by the new catchment, will provide children with the opportunity to develop these skills for life.
- 7.4 The creation of a GM catchment area will demonstrate the Council's commitment to the long-term future of Gaelic Medium education. Evidence of this commitment may help with the known problem with "drop-out" from GME.

### **Effects on School Transport**

- 8.1 Most of the children attending GME at Acharacle PS from within the Acharacle catchment, and those who require school transport utilise the same transport arrangements as those attending English Medium education. Future enrolments in GME from the Strontian PS catchment will be assessed in the same way as at present, with appropriate arrangements being made. As mentioned above, any future enrolments from the Kilchoan PS catchment will be expected to access GME by travelling on the existing public bus.

### **Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements**

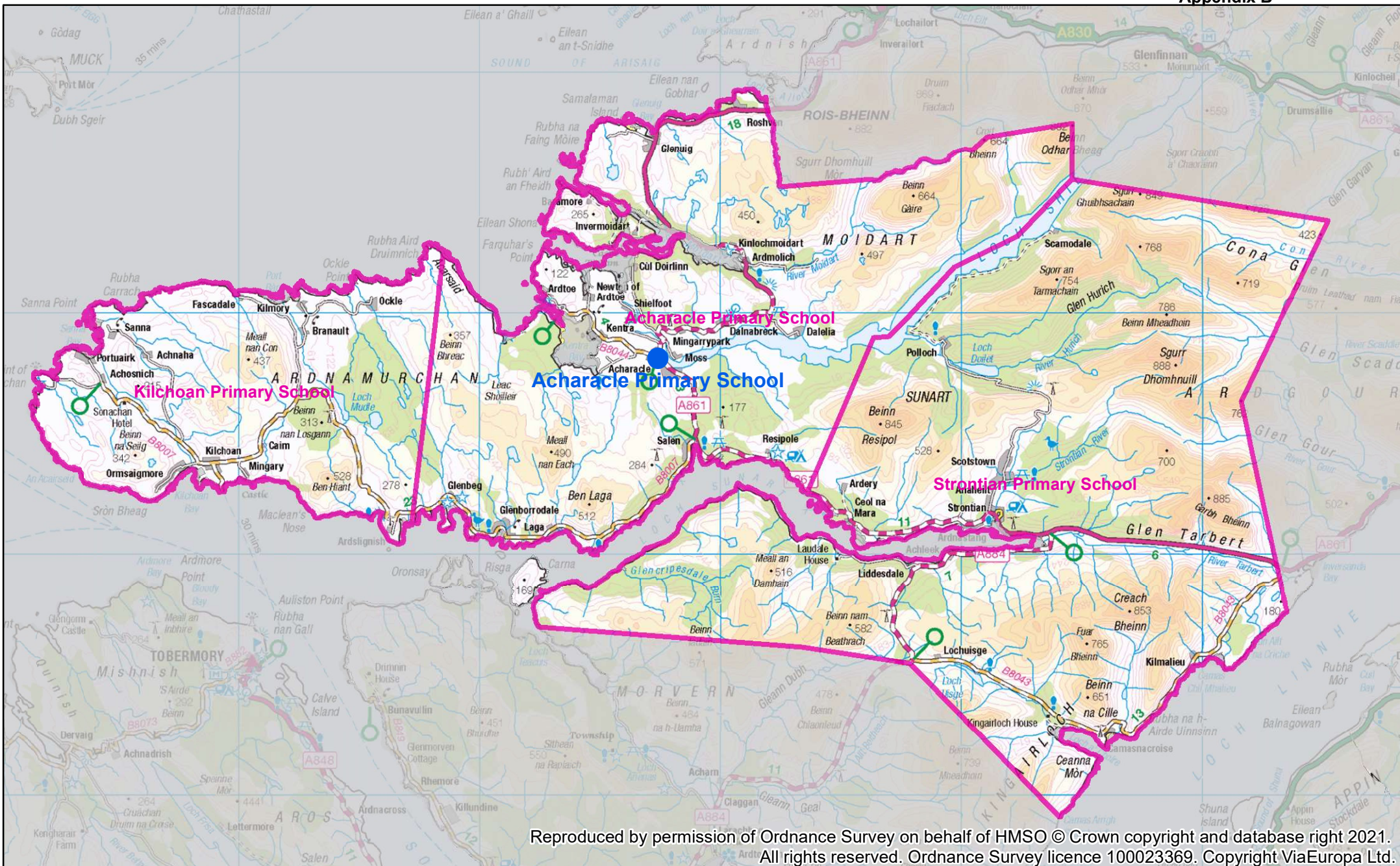
- 9.1 The proposed GM catchment reflects existing practice that has developed on an informal basis. The Council does not expect any significant impact on local school rolls. Nor do we expect any impact on staff within the schools of the Ardnamurchan ASG.

### **Effect on the Local Communities**

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

### **Recommendation**

- 11.1 Highland Council recommends the adoption of a Gàidhlig Medium catchment area for Acharacle 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.



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# Proposed Acharacle Primary School Gaelic Medium catchment

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