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**Review of Education Provision
at
LIONEL SCHOOL (S1/S2)
Isle of Lewis**

**CONSULTATION REPORT
JANUARY 2015**

Roinn an Fhoghlaim is Seirbheisean Chloinne

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR
Education and Children’s Services Department

Review of Education Provision
CONSULTATION REPORT FOR LIONEL SCHOOL (S1/S2)
Isle of Lewis

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

Report by Director of Education and Children's Services

PROPOSAL

It is proposed that:

- **The S1/S2 education provision at Lionel School be discontinued with effect from 26 June 2015.**
- **That the pupils of S1/S2 at Lionel School continue their education at The Nicolson Institute, from 13 August 2015.**

BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The Comhairle previously agreed in November 2010 to discontinue S1/S2 education at Lionel School from 29 June 2012. This decision was called in by Scottish Ministers, and the Comhairle subsequently reconsidered its position and agreed on 21 June 2012 not to discontinue the provision. Since that time, however, pupil numbers have declined, and a number of parents have chosen to send their children to The Nicolson Institute for S1 and S2 from August 2014. The secondary roll for 2014/15 at Lionel S1/S2 is 8 pupils (2 in S1 and 6 in S2).
- 1.2. The Comhairle, at its Meeting on 26 June 2014, authorised the Director of Education and Children's Services to proceed to undertake the necessary statutory consultation with parents, staff, pupils and other interested parties in accordance with the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 ("the Act"), as amended, on a proposal regarding the discontinuation of the S1/S2 provision at Lionel School, being a relevant proposal in terms of Paragraph 1(1)(b)(ii) of Schedule 1 of the Act.
- 1.3. Lionel School is designated as a very remote rural school. In terms of Section 12 of the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010, the Comhairle has given special regard to -
 - any viable alternative to the closure proposal,
 - the likely effect on the local community in consequence of the proposal (if implemented), with reference in particular to
 - (a) the sustainability of the community,
 - (b) the availability of the school's premises and its other facilities for use by the community;
 - the likely effect caused by any different travelling arrangements that may be required in consequence of the proposal (if implemented) with reference in particular to
 - (a) the effect caused by such travelling arrangements including (in particular),
 - (i) that on the school's pupils and staff and any other users of the school's facilities,
 - (ii) any environmental impact,
 - (b) the travelling arrangements are those to and from the school of (and for) the school's pupils and staff and any other users of the school's facilities.

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

- 2.1 The current requirements for consulting on proposed school closures are set out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- A Proposal Document was issued following the Comhairle decision of 26 June 2014 as detailed in Appendix A. A copy of this document was issued free of charge to the consultees as listed in the Proposal Document and was also published on the Comhairle website.
 - An advert was placed in local newspapers on 11 September 2014 and the consultation ran thereafter for a period of 33 school days until 7 November 2014.
 - A public meeting was held on 30 September 2014.
 - Pupils and staff were also consulted separately.
 - HMle involvement included being sent a copy of the proposal document, their attendance at the public meeting and their visiting the affected schools and meeting with parents, pupils and staff. They also received a copy of all written representations. They then prepared a report on the educational aspects of the proposal (Appendix D)
 - This Consultation Report is the Comhairle’s response to issues raised during the consultation period including a response to identified inaccuracies in the consultation information.
 - This Consultation Report will be published at least three weeks before a final decision is taken by the Comhairle on the proposal.

Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment

- 2.2 An Initial Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment (Appendix C), in line with legislation, was undertaken in relation to the proposal for the School. There were no discriminatory or detrimental consequences identified to the proposal being implemented. Therefore a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

CONSULTATION MEETINGS

- 3.1 Consultations meetings were held as follows:
- Public meeting at Lionel School on 30 September 2014.
 - Meetings with staff at both Lionel School and The Nicolson Institute were held separately.
 - Meetings with pupils at both Lionel School and The Nicolson Institute were held separately.

OMISSIONS AND INACCURACIES

- 4.1 Within the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 there is guidance on how errors or omissions should be addressed. The following inaccuracies were identified during the consultation period:

Paragraph 4.3 of the proposal document should read ‘Since August 2013, Lionel School has functioned as a satellite of The Nicolson Institute’.

Paragraph 5.5(b) of the proposal document should read ‘It is estimated that travelling times for S1/S2 pupils at Lionel School to The Nicolson Institute would be in the region of 40 to 60 minutes’.

Paragraph 8.4 of the proposal document states that ‘In addition to the courses currently available in Lionel School, pupils transferring into S1 in The Nicolson Institute from Lionel School will follow a Computing Studies and Business Studies course’. This is not an accurate statement as those courses are available in both schools.

Attention was drawn to the inaccuracies at the Public Meeting and the correct information was given. These inaccuracies were not deemed to be material and therefore no further action was taken in relation to these matters.

REPRESENTATIONS

5.1 The written representations received during the consultation period are detailed below.

Representations from:	Number
• Signed Circular Letter – single sided	318
• Signed Circular letter – double sided	144
• Petition: 226 on-line signatures 572 written signatures	1
• Survey: 47 forms	1
• Parent Council	3
• Ness Community Council	1
• Comunn Eachdraidh Nis	1
• Cross Free Church Continuing	1
• Cross Ness Church of Scotland	1
• Local business	1
• Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn	1
• Pupils	7
• Individuals	48
Total:	528

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS AND COMHAIRLE RESPONSES

6.1 This section details the relevant points raised at the public meeting and in the written submissions. A full transcript of the public meeting is included as Appendix B. A copy of all written representations will be published as part of the Report to Comhairle Members and a redacted version (from which personal data has been removed) published.

6.2 The responses to the issues raised are detailed below.

PUPILS WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS; THE QUALITY OF THEIR EDUCATION AND THEIR TRANSPORT NEEDS

ISSUE: Concern was expressed with regard to support for pupils, pastoral care, Additional Support Needs (ASN) and training and support for staff. There is a concern that pupils attending The Nicolson Institute would not receive the same quality of support as currently offered at S1/S2 in Lionel. There is concern regarding the travel arrangements for pupils with ASN, resident in the Ness area.

RESPONSE

- Legislation provides a mechanism to ensure that any barrier to learning can be identified as an additional support need. All schools in the Western Isles operate staged levels of intervention and have in place appropriate inputs to address needs. Inspections of almost all schools in the Western Isles highlight a good standard of personal and social support to young people. The Nicolson Institute was inspected in 2011. The report stated that 'The school has good arrangements to support young people when they move into S1 from primary school, for those moving into S3 from 5-14 schools, and for those moving into employment and further or higher education.'
- All teaching staff, irrespective of the size of the school, have an annual professional development and review interview with their line manager. The outcome of this review, together with the school and departmental business plan, is used for the planning of appropriate CPD for staff. This helps ensure that all teaching staff are able to contribute effectively to the personal and social support of students.

- The Education and Children's Services Department operates to a robust set of quality improvement procedures and guidance. These procedures require all schools to undertake the following quality assurance checks:
 - that all teachers have appropriate plans;
 - that monitoring of classroom observations take place;
 - that cross-checking of pupils' work is carried out;
 - that pupils' jotters are checked regularly; and
 - that appropriate teaching methods are used.
- On this basis, the Education and Children's Services Department is confident that it is maintaining high standards of professional competence across all schools.
- The Nicolson Institute has the facilities to cater for the needs of all children, including those with additional support needs. At present there are 5.5 equivalent Additional Support Needs teachers who provide flexible and direct support to teaching staff and pupils. The Nicolson Institute has enhanced facilities within the Pupil Support section of the school including dedicated teaching areas and a quiet room. These will also support the quality of learning and teaching for all children who have additional support needs.
- The ASN teachers at The Nicolson Institute provide specialist provision for pupils who require an adapted curriculum. These teachers provide support in class and also deliver smaller tutorial sessions for groups or individuals. All pupils have access to a larger Pupil Guidance Team at The Nicolson Institute and therefore would benefit from more targeted support as and when necessary.
- Although the cohort size is significantly larger at The Nicolson Institute, there are more staff with specialist qualifications in ASN available and those staff would be assigned to provide the support required to individual pupils, according to their specific needs.
- S1 and S2 pupils will also benefit from meeting their Guidance Teachers at an earlier stage in their secondary education and this is helpful in establishing the vital relationship between teacher and pupil and school and home.
- Transport arrangements for pupils with ASN are tailored to the identified needs of the students concerned. This is evaluated through multi-disciplinary assessment and provided accordingly.

ATTAINMENT

ISSUE: A number of issues were raised in relation to attainment, focusing on a perception that S1-2 attainment in The Nicolson Institute is not as good as in Lionel School and that pupils who have attended Lionel in S1/S2 make better progress than others who attend The Nicolson Institute from S1.

RESPONSE:

- The Nicolson Institute represents approximately 70% of the secondary population of The Western Isles. Attainment at The Nicolson Institute is good and achievement for certificate examinations matches or exceeds national results and benchmark comparators in all assessments.
- This proposal is not based on any weakness in the attainment profile of Lionel School. The proposal states that the quality of educational experience available to S1 and S2 pupils will be better. The proposal also notes that the very small number of secondary-aged pupils limits the viability of the secondary school section.
- There is no evidence to suggest that the amalgamation of Lionel S1-2 provision with The Nicolson Institute would result in any reduction in pupils' levels of educational attainment. However, it will provide improved curriculum opportunities and better class groupings to facilitate learning and teaching.
- Pupils in S2, across all secondary schools, undertake Progress in English (PiE) and Progress in mathematics (PiM) assessments. The tests were first introduced in 2013.

- The results for the two schools over the last two years are, as follows:

2013	PiE	PiM	2014	PiE	PiM
Lionel	102.9	97.4	Lionel	108.9	111.2
Nicolson	104.1	101	Nicolson	100.9	111.4

- There were 12 pupils in Lionel S2 in 2014 and 178 in The Nicolson Institute. The national mean standard age score is 100.
- Pupils join The Nicolson Institute from different feeder primary schools across Lewis. Lionel School is the only remaining S1/S2 provision and, consequently, most other S1 pupils join the school directly from primary. Pupils in S1 and S2 make good progress in all areas of learning. There is no evidence to indicate that S3 pupils joining The Nicolson Institute in S3 achieve more highly in examinations or in their broader achievement than other S3 pupils who started their secondary education at The Nicolson Institute.
- The improved curriculum options, including the range of choices available to pupils, will contribute to the quality of education available to Lionel pupils in S1 and S2.

PARENTAL CHOICE

ISSUE: Some parents were concerned that the removal of S1-2 removed parental choice for secondary education in Lewis.

RESPONSE:

- The legislation provides the opportunity for parental choice. However, in the remote and rural setting of the Western Isles, and due to the low level of school population, there are insufficient numbers to support a second S1-6 school in Lewis. It should be noted that all young people in Lewis attend The Nicolson Institute for their S3-6 years.
- Although it is recognised that, at S1 and S2, there will be less choice for parents, it is the case across all of the Western Isles that pupil numbers at secondary are insufficient to provide a cost effective, viable secondary option, even at S1/S2, in any of the islands.

IMPACT OF S1/S2 CLOSURE ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY INCLUDING BUSINESSES AND INWARD MIGRATION

ISSUES: A number of concerns were raised in relation to the possible impact on the community if S1 and S2 sections of the school were to close. These included concerns about the school as the hub of the community being necessary for attracting people to live in the community and having an impact on economic potential.

RESPONSE

- The proposal relates to secondary provision only and, consequently, should the proposal be agreed, the Primary School and Sgoil Araich will continue to serve the Ness community and maintain educational provision for the community.
- Over a period of 30 years, where there has been significantly more schools than at present and where there has been an ongoing annual decline in the pupil population, there is no evidence within the Western Isles, that having a school in a community, increases inward migration. With the improved road infrastructure in the islands there is evidence that people's choice of where to live is determined by a number of factors, mainly employment, rather than the presence of a school.
- The decline in population is not always greater in communities where schools have already closed.
- Almost all of our schools are designated very remote rural schools. The educational strategy is focused on sustaining and strengthening schools in very remote rural locations, where viable.

- The Outer Hebrides Migration Study 2008, identified key factors of sustainable communities, which included sustainable employment, private sector led economic diversity, housing provision, self-determination and clean energy. It is development in these areas that sustains local communities. The discontinuation of the S1/S2 provision at Lionel School would not significantly impact on the identified key factors needed for sustainable communities.
- A school is only one of a number of services in any community and, like any other service, it can only exist where there is a viable demand. Service provision in a community more frequently reflects the demands placed upon it by demographics, population and the economy. Should this proposal be approved Lionel Primary and the school premises will continue to function and would be able to continue to function as a focal point for the community in the future.
- In 2013/14, 9 families chose to make a placement request seeking admission directly into S1/S2 at The Nicolson Institute, rather than Lionel. This included eight from P7 and one from S1. The reasons for the requests reflect the different priorities facing families at the present time.
- In September 2014, a survey was issued by Lionel Parent Council to parents of pupils in nursery to P7 at Lionel School. The survey asked the following questions:
Question 1. How many children do you have attending Lionel School?
Question 2. What class/classes are they in?
Question 3. If Lionel Secondary were to remain open would your child/children continue at Lionel School for S1/S2?
Question 4. Would there be any reason why you may consider The Nicolson Institute over Lionel Secondary?
- The surveys were distributed and collated by parents representing Lionel Parent Council. Of the surveys sent out to each household, 47 completed surveys were returned and 15 were not returned.
- The results of those returned, in terms of individual pupils (covered by the 47 completed surveys), were as follows:
46 children/parents said YES to stay at Lionel for S1 and S2.
16 children/parents said NO to stay at Lionel for S1 and S2.
- Assuming parents were representative of year groups across the school, the survey would indicate around 75% of future S1/S2 attendance across all phases of the school and 25% preference for The Nicolson Institute.
- The survey is a helpful indication of possible future preference but it is not a reliable or accurate indicator, particularly in the case of parents of pupils in the earliest stage of the education at the school. If one quarter of the school roll each year opted to attend The Nicolson Institute, numbers on roll at S1 and S2 would continue to remain low and the educational benefits of maintaining provision would be less than transferring to The Nicolson Institute.

S1/S2 CURRICULUM

ISSUES: Parents questioned whether the curriculum available at S1 and S2 at The Nicolson Institute would be different or better than that currently offered at Lionel.

RESPONSE

- Across the S1/S2 curriculum at The Nicolson Institute, pupils experience a broader range of opportunities to achieve and develop their skills for life, work and learning. At S1 and S2, The Nicolson Institute provides access to a larger team of staff, a greater number of specialist staff and access to facilities and resources, which will successfully enhance the curriculum.

- Much of the S1 curriculum is integrated study within broad curricular areas, with Social Studies, Technology and Creative Crafts delivered through a rota system. In addition to the courses currently available in Lionel School, pupils transferring into S1 in The Nicolson Institute from Lionel School will have the option to study Latin. There are currently 32 pupils in S1 and 28 pupils in S2 who study Latin.
- Due to the size of the cohort and the flexible timetabling arrangements, pupils at The Nicolson Institute can be grouped for learning and teaching purposes according to their needs and their ability levels in English, Mathematics and Languages. This approach has demonstrated significant benefits to pupils. In addition, peer-interaction in the learning process provides significant added value to the learning experience. Due to the small number of pupils, it is not possible to provide such arrangements at Lionel. The Curriculum for Excellence requires active/interactive learning of this nature between pupils as a key element of Level 4 experiences and outcomes. Again, due to smaller pupil numbers, the opportunity to provide such groups in the secondary section of Lionel is limited.
- Lionel School pupils attending The Nicolson Institute would also benefit from access to a wider range of subjects delivered in Gaelic. Currently, pupils in Lionel School who are fluent in Gaelic receive oral instruction in Gaelic in Technical and Home Economics classes. In The Nicolson Institute, pupils who are fluent in Gaelic receive Gaelic Medium teaching in Social Subjects (History, Geography, Modern Studies, RME, Home Economics, Science, PSE and oral instruction in Technical and Business Studies). This places them at an advantage when it comes to dealing with subject specific terminology and course content and prepares them more effectively should they wish to continue with GME subjects into the Senior Phase.
- A programme of inter-disciplinary project work, incorporating Study Skills, runs throughout the session and provides choices for pupils, including options for Drama, Media Studies and Outdoor Education. This wider programme of content is possible due to the larger number of staff available to teach pupils. Lionel is able to offer inter-disciplinary work in S1 though the breadth of subjects available is not as wide due to the fact that there are fewer secondary teachers. So, for example, classes undertaking projects can benefit from teaching input relating to a wide range of subjects which can, in turn, widen pupils' knowledge and understanding of a breadth of subject areas.
- The larger staff team at The Nicolson Institute means that subjects are spread evenly across the week. At Lionel School, due to the smaller staff team and the requirements for travel, English and mathematics are taught twice each week (two 50-minute blocks on two days) and science, Gaelic, French and PE are taught once each week (for two 50-minute blocks) on a single day. The latter approach can impact more significantly in the event of staff or pupil absences. More frequent, shorter periods of exposure to subject instruction are potentially more effective. The S1 and S2 pupils are currently taught together in Lionel and, with the smaller team of staff available, it is sometimes the case that Lionel pupils do not experience the variety of teachers compared to pupils attending The Nicolson Institute. Although teachers will differentiate work to meet the different needs of pupils, the inclusion of two secondary year groups in one class can present a significant challenge in planning and delivering tasks suited to the educational needs of different age group of secondary pupils.

- The S2 Curriculum in The Nicolson Institute is planned to enable pupils to work towards the fourth level of Curriculum for Excellence within curricular areas, in terms of pace and depth of learning. There are no ceilings on what a pupil can achieve and units of work are designed to allow pupils to move into learning at the fourth level - the best springboard for progression to N5. A whole school planning tool called 'The Learning Wall' aids this process. Pupils transferring to The Nicolson Institute from Lionel would benefit from such arrangements, providing better opportunities for setting according to ability and flexibility in accelerated learning. At Lionel, currently, due to the smaller cohort, the opportunity for higher achieving pupils to work alongside larger groups of pupils of similar ability are limited.
- The curriculum in S2 at The Nicolson Institute allows breadth within curricular areas, but also facilitates some degree of specialisation. For example, within Social Subjects, pupils in S2 study History, Geography and Modern Studies under the guidance of a specialist subject teacher. Specialist teachers also deliver courses in Business Studies, ICT and RMPS. This allows for better progression for National Qualifications in S4-S6 in each area. It also ensures that students benefit from the significant subject expertise of teachers across a wider range of subjects than is currently the case at Lionel. At The Nicolson Institute, trained guidance staff and specialist teaching staff impact positively on students' subsequent subject choice.
- Pupils in The Nicolson Institute are well placed to benefit from the Broad General Education with learning set in real-life contexts due to the proximity and accessibility of a broader range of partner agencies that can regularly contribute to and enhance the curriculum. For example, pupils in S1 and S2 work with a range of local partners which support the delivery of the curriculum. At present these include MG Alba; WI Hospital; Stag Bakery; Skills Development Scotland; Community Learning and Development; Lews Castle College; Museum; Police Scotland; An Lanntair; ELR garage; Proiseact nan Ealan. The partnerships specific to Lionel School are with Comunn Eachdraidh Nis and Air an Lot.
- At The Nicolson Institute, due to its size, it is possible to provide certification in S2, including, for example, Auto Engineering SQA Award and Saltire Volunteering Awards - from which Lionel pupils would be able to benefit. The strength and depth of the Pupil Support Team supports pupils more effectively with careers and vocational choices as well as offering a weekly drop-in clinic with Skills Development Scotland advisers. Such breadth of provision is not currently available at Lionel.
- There are also short courses offered at The Nicolson Institute, providing tasters of courses that pupils could elect to study in S3/S4, and thus ensuring that pupils make suitable course choices aligned to their interests, experiences and strengths. At present, due to the limited staffing resources available and timetabling constraints, it is not possible for the pupils at Lionel School to regularly access such courses.
- Pupils in The Nicolson Institute also have the opportunity to be part of a broader range of electives programmes, such as the School of Rugby, which focus on improving pupils' skill acquisition and their health and well-being. Other electives on offer include Small Boat Handling, Sports Leadership, School Radio, Museum Studies, Auto Engineering, Drama/Music/School Production, Harris Tweed Design and Make, Photography, Logo Global and Volunteering. In term 1, at present, Lionel pupils only have access to one 'elective' course, once again due to the limited staffing availability and timetabling constraints. In terms 2 and 3, Lionel S1 and S2 pupils have access to an increased range of electives through their attendance at The Nicolson Institute during the week.

- All pupils in S2 at The Nicolson Institute have a Tutor Time programme, which ensures that pupils have more time and support to work in a broad peer group setting to reflect on their learning, their strengths and their weaknesses. It also enables them to work together to enhance their learning skills, their entrepreneurial skills and their citizenship skills. A similar system operates in Lionel School, but its impact is reduced as a result of the limited number of students able to participate. Lionel School pupils would benefit from such provision in larger peer groups.
- In attending The Nicolson Institute, S1/S2 pupils transferring from Lionel School would have access to a wider range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities available to all other S1 and S2 pupils in The Western Isles promoting social, cultural, sport and musical skills. It would also enhance opportunities for social interaction and extending friendship groups. This provides pupils with opportunities to participate in activities, which contribute towards wider achievement, which is becoming increasingly important as one of the main contexts for learning.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES

ISSUES: There was a concern that children in S1 and S2 would not be able to participate in extra-curricular activities because attendance would result in a late return home to Lionel. There was a concern also that, if children did attend activities after school, then they would not be able to access transport home. There was some concern regarding the potential implications for after-school activities in the local community.

RESPONSE

- In general, it is the case that larger schools, with more staff, will be able to offer a broader range and frequency of after-school activities.
- If children wish to participate in after-school activities, schools will normally make arrangements for children to get passes on the service bus, or where possible, provide other transport. S1 and S2 pupils from other parts of Lewis, including for example, Uig and Lochs, currently attend after-school events and activities at The Nicolson Institute.
- After school activities will also continue to be supported through Community Education, Sport and Health and the Voluntary Sector.
- In addition, there are a significant number of lunchtime clubs available to S1 and S2 pupils at The Nicolson Institute. These include at present, Basketball, Creative Writing, Study Support, Scripture Union, Reading Group, Drama, Film Appreciation, Essay Writing, Junior Book Club, Accordion Group, Shinty and Melodeon Club. There are currently no lunchtime clubs on offer for Lionel S2/S2 pupils.
- The Education and Children's Services Department accepts that there is a close relationship between community partners and the school. Lionel School is not closing and secondary-age pupils from the Ness area will continue to return to their community after school. On this basis, there is no reason to assume that the transfer of S1-2 pupils to The Nicolson Institute would have a significant impact on the use of community resources.
- S3 pupils, resident in Ness, and attending The Nicolson Institute participate in school-based extra-curricular clubs. Travel arrangements are adjusted or made by parents and, although the pupils are older than S1 and S2 there is no indication that travel limits choice or participation in Stornoway or Ness-based activities.

LUNCHTIME ARRANGEMENTS

ISSUES: Children’s access to the town centre caused concerns in relation to less healthy eating, alleged nuisance behaviour, attendance and peer-group influences. There was concern about lack of capacity at The Nicolson Institute meaning that pupils were unable to eat a hot lunch within the school during the lunch break.

RESPONSE

- Pupils from S1 to S6 currently attend The Nicolson Institute and a number of pupils do walk into Stornoway town centre during the lunchtime break. Pupils in S1 and S2 have taken lunch in the town centre for a number of years and this has not led to significant nuisance behaviour or inappropriate peer group pressure. The number of reported incidents is minimal. Incidents, should they occur are addressed promptly and appropriately by school staff. The Department accepts that pupils have a choice and can exercise that choice, e.g. subject to parental consent, pupils can choose to visit and eat in the town centre. The promotion of healthy life choices is a shared responsibility between children, parents and school.
- It is notable that revisions to the school timetable from 2013/14 at The Nicolson Institute have reduced the lunchtime break time to 40 minutes. This has contributed to some reduction in the number of students leaving the school premises at lunchtime. Improved lunchtime choices and additional facilities have led to a 20% increase in school meal uptake over the last two years. Continued improvements to the service and meal choices are planned over the coming two years and it is anticipated that this will lead to further increases in school meal uptake.
- If there is sufficient interest from parents, it is proposed that the school should review the arrangements for lunchtime for S1 and S2 pupils. The school, in consultation with the Parent Council, may wish to consider requiring all S1 and S2 pupils to remain on school premises over the lunchtime period. This consultation should be undertaken in preparation for the new academic session 2015/16.
- Health and well-being is given significant priority in all school curricula in The Western Isles. All schools meet health promotion criteria and school meals comply with National Nutritional Guidelines.
- The new Nicolson Institute canteens, including The Kabin, accommodate all pupils who wish to use the facilities. There is capacity across lunchtime provision for any additional pupils who may join the school from Lionel S1/S2.
- The Nicolson Institute uses an electronic-based attendance system which is recorded by staff on a period by period basis. On return from lunchtime, teaching staff are able to ensure attendance of all pupils. The school has internal systems in place to monitor pupil behaviour.
- Consistent with other school-based security initiatives, The Nicolson Institute operates Groupcall, CCTV around the campus, and period-by-period registration. Door entry security is also in operation. Consequently, attendance after lunchtime is closely monitored by staff.

TRAVEL TIME AND IMPACT ON PUPILS

ISSUES: A number of concerns were raised in relation to travel of S1-2 pupils from Lionel to The Nicolson Institute. These included: distance, time, impact on academic performance, vulnerability of some children, ability to do homework, reduced access to extra-curricular activities. Local authorities are required to consider the impact of revised travel plans within each proposal.

RESPONSE

- Lionel School is approximately 27 miles from The Nicolson Institute. The Comhairle's Home to School Travel Policy states that 'free home to school' transport will be provided for secondary-aged children who have to walk more than 3 miles. In addition, the policy states that secondary pupils may be required to travel up to one hour and twenty minutes on their journey to and from school. The same policy states that 'the Comhairle will actively minimise the travel time ...with the goal of keeping all pupil travel time under one hour'.
- In August 2014, the Comhairle provided an additional dedicated school bus from Ness to The Nicolson Institute. This was in response to greater demand of S3 to S6 pupils and an increase in the number of parent preference requests for S1 and S2 pupils. The travel time on the bus, from Skigersta, Ness to The Nicolson Institute is currently approximately 60 minutes. The journey from Skigersta to The Nicolson Institute would be the longest bus journey scheduled for pupils in the Lionel catchment area.
- From August 2015, from Monday to Thursday, the morning journey to The Nicolson Institute will start at 07:45 and will arrive at The Nicolson Institute at 08:40. The afternoon journey will start at The Nicolson Institute at 15:45 and arrive in Ness at 16:40. Both journeys are within the travel time criteria as described in the policy.
- From August 2015, on Fridays, the morning journey to The Nicolson Institute will start at 07:45 and will arrive at The Nicolson Institute at 08:40. The afternoon journey will start at The Nicolson Institute at 14:00 and arrive in Ness at 14:55. Both journeys are within the travel time criteria as described in the policy.
- Transport for school-aged pupils is provided mainly through a dedicated school bus service however one bus from The Nicolson Institute to Lionel / Eoropie is shared with members of the public on Monday to Thursday afternoons. Where pupils attend an after-school activity or a special school event in Stornoway, they may need to return home using one of the later public bus services and these pupils will be issued with a late travel pass by the school entitling them to free travel.
- In general, integrated and school only transport provision does not have supervisory staff on the buses. Dedicated transport for children with ASN, whether taxi or buses, may have auxiliary support provided, dependent on assessed needs.
- In addition, after-school activities will also continue to be supported in local communities.
- Numbers of passengers on buses are subject to regulation and the Comhairle transport manager ensures that overloads are dealt with by the provision of extra seating capacity, through additional transport.
- The numbers of pupils on buses do not exceed the stated seating capacity.
- All bus contractors meet rigorous contractual obligations. All bus drivers have appropriate checks and the transport service is delivered to a high standard. Drivers and the public have, where appropriate, made referrals in terms of any nuisance behaviour on buses or child protection concerns. All of these are robustly investigated and addressed.
- Throughout the Western Isles, in the interests of efficiency and increased services for the public, an integrated transport arrangement is in place. This has operated for a period of approximately 18 years. On some routes, where there is demand but no capacity on the integrated service, dedicated school transport is provided. Over this period integrated transport has provided a good service with few complaints from pupils, parents or members of the public.

- It is observed that on some routes, the adult presence on the bus has a positive effect on pupil behaviour. It can reduce bullying or other nuisance behaviour.
- Parents are responsible for their children when travelling to and from school. The driver is responsible for pupils whilst on school transport, whether this is provided through a dedicated service, or through the integrated transport provision.
- It is important to note that S3-6 pupils have been undertaking this journey for many years, and have coped not only with its physical demands, but with the academic, social and recreational demands.

ISSUES: Concerns were expressed in relation to mental well-being and travel. These included tiredness, long day, potential bullying, stress, impact on homework and loss of family time.

RESPONSE

- The Comhairle and parents agree that there are a number of shared concerns. These include a longer school day and the possibility of reduced opportunities for family time.
- Research conducted into the effect of travel to school does not say that children should not travel, but has highlighted some things that should be considered to reduce any negative effects. These include:
 - Providing a good quality bus;
 - Competent and friendly driver;
 - Shortest route possible;
 - Exercise before school;
- Travel time is often used by young people to make friends, enjoy time together, making them more resistant to bullying, either through the support of friends or through adult presence. Some use the time to be better organised, become more independent and take more responsibility for themselves. In addition, many children use this time to listen to music, read, and or interact with others.
- On this basis, the Education and Children's Services Department has ensured that there are good buses on the route, competent drivers, and that pupils travelling from the same area are together. All of these factors are reinforced within service contracts, and have proved to be effective over many years, for S3-6 pupils. S1/S2 pupils in other parts of Lewis and in Uist travel to school on buses and some travel for a similar length of time to that proposed for Ness pupils. These arrangements have proven successful.
- The Comhairle will continue to provide transportation that meets all contract specifications and which ensures safe travel for all pupils.
- Written comments and contributions from members of the community at the public meetings questioned whether excessive travel time for S1 and S2 children could have an adverse effect on children's health. There were concerns that children could be over tired and that longer travel could affect their mental health, cognitive and social development. The Comhairle has consulted with Dr. Maggie Watts (Director of Public Health, NHS Western Isles) regarding the proposal to close S1/S2 provision in Lionel School.
- Dr. Watts provided an overview of research literature in relation to the health impact of transport on school pupils. Dr. Watts states that available literature is limited and of variable quality. There is very little research relating to specific ages of children, including early secondary.

- Dr. Watts identified a health impact assessment undertaken by NHS Shetland in which a range of impacts of school travel were considered. The main points from this are summarised as:
 - Physical activity could have positive effects on mental performance, behaviour, self-esteem in some situations but there is no reliable evidence that walking or cycling at the start of the school day improves cognitive abilities;
 - Different travel to school experiences can lead to the development of different skills;
 - Social behaviour and relationships. Stress and problem behaviour may result from difficult or long journeys;
 - Non-car travel allows more freedom of movement of children and long journeys have a negative effect on children's educational performance. Long travel times in an uncomfortable bus or an inability to participate in extra-curricular activities may reduce academic achievement;
 - Focus groups suggest that children had improved organisational skills including time and money management as a result of their independent travel to school;
 - Evidence from car-pooling indicates improved social development of children.

- Should the proposal be approved, the Department will work closely with the Parent Council and staff of Lionel School and The Nicolson Institute to establish a transition plan which will aim to minimise any potential impact of travel to and from school. This could include;
 - Monitoring of journeys by The Nicolson Institute school senior staff to reassure parents in the transition period following the implementation of the proposal;
 - A review of travel routes and pick up arrangements by Comhairle transport staff to help continue to minimise journey and waiting times;
 - Allocating members of staff to bus journeys for an initial period to support pupils who may be anxious and monitor the provision, where necessary;
 - Transport staff from the Comhairle to monitor the effectiveness of the service provided by bus companies and their drivers and provide feedback to ensure a service which meets the required standards..

PUPIL NUMBERS AND STAFFING-

ISSUES: During the consultation process the number of pupils currently attending The Nicolson Institute was questioned. Class sizes were a concern for some who pointed out that class sizes would be much smaller at Lionel. Individuals requested that the Comhairle should check census figures for the Lionel area as it was thought that the numbers given in the Consultation Report were not up to date. There was concern also that, if pupils did transfer to The Nicolson Institute from S1/S2, staff shortages would impact significantly on the quality of education provided.

RESPONSE

- Class sizes in S1 and S2 at The Nicolson Institute are larger than is currently the case at Lionel. In August 2015, should the proposal be approved and Lionel pupils attend S1 and S2 at The Nicolson Institute, class sizes will be consistent with national guidance and requirements.
- Census figures for S1/S2 in the Lionel area indicate maximum pupil numbers as follows:
 - 2015/16 18 pupils
 - 2016/17 25 pupils
 - 2017/18 20 pupils
 - 2018/19 26 pupils
 - 2019/20 21 pupils
 - 2020/21 18 pupils
 - 2021/22 20 pupils

- Information in the proposal document refers to the pupil roll at Lionel. It is clear from recent trends that the numbers above would constitute a predicted maximum total of pupils on roll.
- The Nicolson Institute and Lionel have sufficient staff for the number of pupils on roll. Shortages in specific subjects, particularly sciences and mathematics are a national issue and have, to some extent, affected provision in the secondary schools across The Western Isles. However, in The Nicolson Institute, where there are staff absences, it is easier to provide experienced and qualified supply cover from existing teams because the pool of staff available is larger. There are currently vacancies for teachers of Physics and Mathematics in The Nicolson Institute.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION AND COSTS FOR ALTERNATIVES

ISSUES: Further information was requested in relation to the financial savings to the Comhairle should the proposal be approved. The anticipated costs of alternatives identified in the proposal document were also requested.

RESPONSE

- The proposal emphasises the educational benefits of S1/S2 pupils from Lionel attending The Nicolson Institute. The Comhairle's decision to proceed to statutory consultation was based on the impact of current and projected rolls on its ability to deliver a Curriculum for Excellence in Lionel S1/2 and not on financial grounds. The financial information is provided as a requirement of Scottish Government legislation and in response to particular questions raised by stakeholders during the consultation process.
- The Comhairle used the financial reporting tool required by Scottish Government to report potential savings arising from this proposal. Exact pupil numbers cannot be verified or finalised for S1/S2 Lionel for August 2015 as preference requests are not submitted and processed until February 2015. Consequently, the saving of £43K indicated within the Proposal Document is based on current pupil numbers and current costs with inflation included for main expenditure costs.
- The Comhairle considered five alternative options as alternatives to closure. These were:
 - a) maintain the status quo.**
This would have no financial implications.
This option does not provide educationally beneficial class groupings which would enrich the learning experiences of students. This option does not increase the curricular opportunities for pupils. It does not increase the number of specialist staff, resources and subjects available to pupils.
 - b) increase the time Lionel S1 and S2 pupils attend The Nicolson Institute.**
Depending on how this was timetabled it may lead to an increase in travel costs.
This option would not ensure a consistently broad and balanced curriculum nor would it offer sufficiently regular access for pupils to educationally beneficial class groupings to enrich their learning experiences. Lionel pupils would potentially spend more time travelling. This would also erode further the case for a 2 site educational provision.
 - c) extend the provision to S1-S3.**
On the basis of a roll of 20 (the current S1/2 plus the 12 in S2 in 2013/14) this would require additional staffing resources of at least £86k. A S1-3 provision could be accommodated within the current space and the property related costs would not increase.
This option does not provide educationally beneficial class groupings which would enrich the learning experiences of pupils. Neither does it provide the improved curriculum opportunities detailed within the educational benefits statement. The Comhairle does not, within its current budget, have the means to develop, fully staff and resource such an extended provision.

d) extend the provision to S1-S6.

On the basis of a roll of 70 (the current S1/2 plus the past 4 years of S2, adjusted for current staying on rates in S5 and S6) this would require additional staffing resources of at least £605k. This would be of a similar size to Castlebay school and if teaching costs from Castlebay were used the increase would be £785k.

In addition there would be a need for capital investment to provide appropriate teaching space to accommodate the curriculum through to S6. The most relevant comparator for this in terms of space is Sir E Scott school and, on this basis, a minimum additional 703 square meters would be needed. The cost of building the new school in North Uist is £4,233 per square metre and on this basis the investment needed would be £2.9m.

This option does not provide educationally beneficial class groupings which would enrich the learning experiences of pupils. The Comhairle does not, within its current budget, have the means to develop, fully staff and resource such an extended provision.

e) temporarily close the S1/S2 section of Lionel until pupil numbers rise.

This would not have any additional financial consequences for the Comhairle as the building will be retained.

This option is known as 'mothballing'. The demographic profile of the community does not provide evidence of sufficient growth in the birth-16 population.

These options are therefore not considered to be viable.

Education Scotland (HMI) REPORT

- 7.1 In line with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, a report was provided by HM Inspectorate on the educational aspects of the proposed closure of Lionel School (S1-2) and the transfer of pupils to The Nicolson Institute. This report is attached as Appendix D.
- 7.2 The Report also identifies issues for consideration by the Comhairle as follows.

EDUCATION SCOTLAND (HMI) REPORT

ISSUE: The Council should continue to take steps to reassure parents about procedures for ensuring safe travel to and from school.

RESPONSE

- This point is addressed on page 13 of this Consultation Report.
- The HMI report states that 'the council has given due consideration to the differing travel arrangements that will arise from the implementation of the proposal'. This includes the fact that the arrangements already introduced by the Comhairle have led to a 'small, but positive effect on total journey times'.
- The Department for Education and Children's Services will work closely with colleagues in Transport to evaluate any ways in which routes can be made more direct and reduce travel time both to and from Stornoway. Any possible reductions in travel time will be considered and implemented within available budgets for school transport.

- The Comhairle recognises the concerns of parents regarding the travel time of S1 and S2 pupils. Should the proposal be agreed by the Comhairle, the Department will work closely with the Parent Council of Lionel School and The Nicolson Institute to plan the transition arrangements before August 2015 in order to ensure that concerns from individual parents are considered and, wherever possible, addressed.
- The Department will monitor travel arrangements closely to ensure that any incidents of poor behaviour are promptly identified and managed. Drivers will be asked to be particularly vigilant and incidents will be reported to senior staff at The Nicolson Institute.

ISSUE: The Council will need to ensure that it takes the necessary steps to investigate the issues raised in Section 3.8 of the HMI report (projected future rolls and perceived lack of clarity about projected financial savings and how well the council has costed and considered the viability of alternative arrangements).

RESPONSE

- This point is addressed on pages 16 and 17 of the Consultation Report. The Department has noted the responses from parents during the consultation in relation to pupil numbers and future school roll at S1/S2 at Lionel. The Comhairle used census information and also current pupil numbers at Lionel. It should be noted that the difference is minimal and the exact roll for future years is difficult to indicate accurately because a number of parents have, in the past, chosen to educate their children at The Nicolson Institute from S1. The survey completed by Lionel Parent Council indicates some parents may still wish to choose S1 at The Nicolson Institute. These figures cannot, however, be taken as a precise indication of pupil numbers in future academic sessions. In 2013/14 around one half of eligible parents selected The Nicolson Institute for S1 and S2.
- The Comhairle's Director of Finance and Corporate Resources has comprehensively reviewed the methodology and accuracy of the financial information included in the consultation and proposal documents. The Department used the prescribed financial reporting format from Scottish Government in preparing the consultation report. The format states clearly the anticipated savings from the implementation of the proposal. It should be noted furthermore that the consultation report placed significant emphasis on the educational benefits of the proposal and stated that any financial benefits were not the reason for the decision to consult. Although there will be some financial saving from the implementation of the proposal, the focus within the consultation process has been on the range of educational benefits of the proposal.
- A number of alternatives to closure of S1/S2 have been considered as part of this process. Further alternatives have also been offered by community groups and by parents. The main alternatives and the additional costs of such are listed above on pages 16 and 17. A further alternative was offered by a community group which proposed that S1 to S6 pupils, resident in the Ness area, should be educated for certain sessions each week in community facilities. The advantages of such a proposal would be that the pupils would be nearer to home and would have less time to travel either to school or from school. It was also argued that such an arrangement could allow pupils to undertake educational activities in the locality of their homes including, for example, family history, crofting and local studies (geography, local history). The Department has carefully considered this, and other similar options. The activities proposed would require significant teacher and senior staff involvement. This would limit the availability of those staff to other pupils. Similarly, although physically nearer to home, it is not considered that the alternative proposal would ensure the breadth of curriculum options and activities, which constitute the main advantage of the Comhairle's proposal.

ISSUE: In its final consultation report, the council needs to consider the points raised by stakeholders.

RESPONSE

- The HMI report identified three areas of specific concern raised in the consultation by stakeholders. The first related to the viability of alternatives to the proposal. This has been considered in other sections of this consultation report on pages 16 and 17. The second related to 'differing travel arrangements'. This has, similarly, been addressed elsewhere in this consultation report. A third relates to 'the council's assessment of the impact of the proposal on the local community'.
- As stated elsewhere in the HMI report, 'the primary school and all of the building's facilities will still remain available to members of the public and the local community'. It is noted that HMI state that 'the Council has given reasonable consideration to the impact of the proposal on the local community'. Information relating to impact of the proposal on the community is stated on pages 7 and 8 of this Consultation Report.
- Some stakeholders suggest the closure of S1/S2 would lead to a potential lack of economic investment in the area and a reduction in the number of families choosing to move to the region. The Department has examined the impact of the closure of S1/S2 in other areas of The Western Isles. Although it is the case that pupil rolls are falling, this has been a long-term trend and not aligned only to those areas where S1/S2 provision has ended. There is no evidence of any decline in the economic investment or development in such areas as a consequence of the removal of S1/S2 classes.
- It should be noted that the pupil numbers in S1/S2 at Lionel have reduced more recently primarily because an increasing number of parents have chosen to send their children directly to S1/S2 at The Nicolson Institute. This has not resulted in any notable reduction in pupil numbers in early years or primary and it can be argued, consequently, that the primary school will continue to maintain its current roll into the immediate future based on census information and pupil numbers in the early stages of the school.

ISSUE: In reviewing the proposal and preparing its final consultation report, the council needs to work closely with parents, staff, children and the wider community in addressing their concerns. This includes their remaining concerns about safety and supervision on school transport.

RESPONSE

- If the proposal is approved by the Comhairle, between the point of decision and implementation, the Department will work closely with staff, parents and pupils of Lionel School and The Nicolson Institute to plan a smooth transition for all relevant pupils as detailed above on page 15.
- The concerns regarding safety and supervision on school transport are addressed above.

ISSUE: The council also needs to address the alleged errors and omissions in the proposal. These include those highlighted by the Parent Council at Lionel School in its written submission to the council.

RESPONSE

- The Parent Council of Lionel School submitted a response to the consultation within which numerous alleged inaccuracies in the Comhairle's consultation document are identified.

- The Director of Education and Children's Services has considered the alleged omissions and considers that the proposal document, the consultation document and the Education Scotland (HMI) report provide comprehensive information in regard to the proposal.
- With regard to the alleged inaccuracies in the consultation report, these are considered in turn;

Section 5. Alleged inaccuracy in school roll figures.

The numbers on roll vary from time to time. The numbers stated in the consultation document constitute the maximum known to the Department from available census and school data. It is not possible to predict accurately either the number of families moving into the Ness area in the future, or the number of families making placement requests to The Nicolson Institute. Consequently, the consultation document provides an indication of the approximate roll for forthcoming years.

Section 6. Alleged weakness in educational benefits statement.

It should be noted that the HMI report, in Section 3.2, identifies that the statements provided by the Comhairle in the consultation document 'form a strong case for the overall educational benefits of the proposal'. The educational benefits for the proposal are stated on pages 8-11 of this document.

Section 8. Alleged errors in the curriculum information in relation to Business Studies, Computing Studies and Latin.

This inaccuracy in the Proposal Document was noted prior to the public meeting and was stated at the beginning of the same meeting and identified at Section 4.1 of the proposal document. The Lionel Parent Council response does not recognise the advantages to S1 pupils at The Nicolson Institute in terms of inter-disciplinary learning and the fact that pupils will have access to a wider range of specialised staff at S1 for such projects; the breadth of which is not currently available at Lionel School, due to the number of pupils on roll and the number of teaching staff available.

Section 8.18. Alleged inaccuracy in relation to the deployment of staff and the impact of such on teaching and learning.

Information relating to supply cover and teacher absences for 2014/15 was provided on request. This information demonstrates that long-term vacant posts were covered in The Nicolson Institute by a range of staff of which a significant number held qualifications in the specialist subject required. Consequently, the information shared at the public meeting was accurate. In Lionel it should be noted that, in all eight cases, it was possible to provide cover for the class but that the teacher who covered the class, did not specialise in the required subject. The Nicolson Institute, being a much larger school, with a larger staff team, will have more absences than a smaller school. However, the impact of absence due to illness or other circumstances is reduced as a consequence of the availability of an overall larger team to provide cover.

Section 8.29. Alleged inaccuracy in relation to the capacity of The Nicolson Institute, particularly in terms of school meals provision.

The Nicolson Institute canteen, including new sections and facilities has capacity to meet the lunchtime demand and would be sufficient for the additional students should the proposal be implemented.

Section 8.33. Alleged inaccuracies in the Educational Benefits Statement.

The Lionel Parent Council response neglects to refer to the subject choice benefits relating to S2, extra-curricular opportunities, Gaelic and inter-disciplinary learning in S1. The option to select Latin in S1 should not be belittled, as it is a most popular and successful course option amongst current S1 to S6 pupils.

Section 8.33. Alleged inaccuracy in relation to access to teaching staff.

The consultation document is emphasising that, should the proposal proceed, Lionel S1 and S2 pupils will have access to a larger staff team, including a wider range of subject specialist teachers and Principal Teachers. The larger team will inevitably have a wider range of professional development opportunities and expertise. It is acknowledged that Lionel pupils may continue to have access to their existing teachers. They will, in addition, however, work with many others.

Section 9.5. Alleged inaccuracy in evaluating the impact on the community of Ness.

The statement within the proposal document, 'It is not believed that the discontinuation of the S1/S2 provision at Lionel School would significantly impact on the identified key factors needed for sustainable communities' (page 15) is based on knowledge of recent school rationalisation programmes and the Outer Hebrides Migration Study 2008. Responses from stakeholders indicate that a few did indeed move to the Ness area and chose the school due to the existence of S1/S2 provision. However, overall, the falling roll and increase in preference requests to Stornoway, would indicate that there has been a decline in the number of families wishing to send their children to S1/S2 at Lionel.

Section 10. Alleged inaccuracies in financial information.

- The provision of financial information is a requirement of the consultation process and further financial information was provided, on request, to stakeholders to answer specific questions raised during the consultation process. The consultation documents focus primarily on the significant educational benefits of the proposal. The financial information provided as part of the consultation process was completed following the format and template provided by Scottish Government.
- The template issued by the Commission for Rural Education, and completed by the Comhairle in line with guidance, states clearly what figures have been included in order to arrive at the cost per pupil (CPP) figure. More information was requested in respect of the Primary School especially with regard to the allocation of costs and this was provided to the Parent Council. The figure of £40k quoted earlier in the summer was based on figures produced in line with the draft template being developed by the Commission for Rural Education. This draft template included a requirement to include an element of Central Management and Support costs which was removed in the final agreed template.
- The building and running costs between the Primary and Secondary departments in the schools are apportioned on the basis of floor area data held by the ECS department. Whilst it is acknowledged that the number of pupils is low at present and 'only one classroom is used at a time', there is traditionally space dedicated to the Secondary department. In all schools where there exists Primary and Secondary provision an allocation must be made of 'shared costs' and floor area is often the best or only available data on which to do this. This is generally an exercise undertaken when the CPP or similar information is required. The building costs to the Comhairle in total will not change and so any costs currently allocated to the Secondary will revert to the Primary if no rooms are mothballed. Again the information provided in the template (see Column 4) clearly outlines that no savings in building costs are anticipated from closing S1/S2 and so it is incorrect to say that this is an inaccuracy.

- The figure of £117,001 quoted for the teaching staff in Lionel Secondary is accurate, as is the figure given for staffing in the Primary. The figure may appear high as it includes promoted staff, and an element of management time (1 day per week) for the Depute HT situated in The Nicolson Institute. The figure of £119,320 quoted in the table includes the supply cost of £2,319 again outlined in the table and is therefore also accurate.
- The reference to Ancillary Support in Lionel Secondary in the Consultation paper indicates that there is no FTE input at the present time in respect of ASN/Learning Support. The staffing cost of £36,129 represents 50% of the budgeted Janitorial cost and 50% of the Clerical/ Admin Assistant post and does not relate to learning support or ASN. Again, the consultation correctly states that these costs would remain with the school, regardless of whether the S1/S2 department closes or not. These staff costs (£36k) are included in the description of Support staff in the narrative of the report and in the template. The report narrative seeks to provide additional, not conflicting, information regarding ancillary (or ASN) staff.
- In response to the conclusions outlined, the proposal / consultation paper indicates a saving of approximately £45k in the template. The basis of calculating CPP is based on the information requested by the Commission with apportionments made for shared building costs.
- **Question. How is the saving of £38,391 being made regarding teaching staff? How is Lionel Secondary footing the bill for £117,001 teaching staff costs, when these teachers are also employed by NI?**
There will be capacity to reduce overall FTE across all Western Isles schools if Lionel S1/S2 closes, resulting in the £38k saving figure quoted. The figure of £117,001 quoted for the teaching staff in Lionel Secondary is accurate, as is the figure given for staffing in the Primary. The figure may appear high as it includes promoted staff, and an element of management time (1 day per week) for the Depute HT situated in The Nicolson Institute. The costs of staffing to the Comhairle include on-costs associated with staff such as National Insurance, Superannuation and not just salary. Staff that work between The Nicolson Institute and Lionel have their costs allocated appropriately to each school - they are not counted twice.
- **Question. Who do they mean by support staff? £36,129**
The staffing cost of £36,129 represents 50% of the budgeted Janitorial cost and 50% of the Clerical/ Admin Assistant post, as detailed in the consultation there is no saving on these posts as costs will revert fully to the Primary if the Secondary closes.
- **Question. Staff training £555 - they use the same teachers in The Nicolson Institute and Lionel. Saving £222**
A small proportion of teaching staff will be saved therefore a small element of saving in training and associated travel costs across core and supply staff is assumed.
- **Question. Supply costs Lionel £2,319. Nicolson 0. Saving of £2,319. How?**
The Nicolson Institute has its own devolved Supply budget (approx. £42k in 2014-15) and much of the supply required is provided by existing staff in the school so there would be no need to create additional budget for this in The Nicolson Institute. Therefore, there is no requirement to transfer the cost to the receiving school.

- **Question. Non-domestic rates of £18,190, Water & sewerage charges £2,435, Energy Costs, £36,950, Cleaning costs £17,981, Building repair/maintenance £5,710 and Grounds maintenance of £3,600. For 8 pupils?**

The building and running costs between the Primary and Secondary departments in the schools are apportioned on the basis of floor area data held by the ECS department. Whilst it is acknowledged that the number of pupils is low at present and 'only one classroom is used at a time', there is traditionally space dedicated to the Secondary department. In all schools where there exists Primary and Secondary provision an allocation must be made of 'shared costs' and floor area is often the best or only available data on which to do this. This is generally an exercise undertaken when the CPP or similar information is required. The building costs to the Comhairle in total will not change and so any costs currently allocated to the Secondary will revert to the Primary if no rooms are mothballed. Again the information provided in the template (see Column 4) clearly outlines that no savings in building costs are anticipated from closing S1/S2.
- **Question. Catering costs Lionel £5,590. Nicolson £ 3,500. Saving of £2,090. How do they come to this figure? There are no free meal pupils in Secondary, they all pay and most of them are on packed lunch.**

There is a subsidised school catering service provided in schools. This service in Lionel is provided across Primary and Secondary and again an allocation is made of costs based on pupil numbers and available information in respect of meals provided. It has been assumed that of the element charged to Secondary over 60% of these costs have been transferred to The Nicolson Institute with a relatively small amount of £2,090 (3.7%) assumed as a saving. This equates to £11 per day.
- **Question. Staff travel. Lionel £47? The Nicolson Institute £23. Saving of £23 going to be made? What/who is this travel expense for?**

Of the small budget allocated to the school for staff travel, an allocation is made of costs between Primary and Secondary. As with training costs an assumption is made that a very small element of this will be saved by having fewer staff in the school.
- **Question. Pupil Home to School £ 25,751 for 8 pupils who all pay for the bus.**

The home to school transport provided at Lionel covers both Primary and Secondary. The costs are allocated on the basis of the most recent data available re contract splits and pupil numbers for the purposes of calculating CPP. Again, this is a heavily subsidised service with costs of £83k allocated to Lionel at the start of 2014-15. The total budget for home to school transport across the Islands amounts to over £2.6M. Although this sum is used to prepare CPP figures no assumption has been made that any savings will be made on travel.
- **Question. Other pupil transport costs Lionel £165 , The Nicolson Institute £83 Saving of £83 will be made ? What is this?**

Of the small budget allocated to the school for pupil travel, an allocation is made of costs between Primary and Secondary. As with staff travel costs an assumption is made that a very small element of this will be saved by having fewer pupils in the school.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION WITH PUPILS

8.1 Consultation with pupils was carried out in September and October 2014. At Lionel School all S1 and S2 pupils attending school on the day of the consultation were interviewed, alongside other primary aged pupils. At The Nicolson Institute, pupils from different stages of the school were interviewed, including a few currently living in the Ness area and former Lionel pupils. Pupils were told;

“You might know that the Education & Children’s Services Department is consulting pupils, staff, parents and the public on the possible closure of Lionel secondary in June 2015. I’m here to take a note of your views, then to report these views to the department.”

Summary of Consultation with Lionel School (S1-2) Pupils

8.2 In this consultation it was the view of a significant majority of pupils that they wanted to retain their own school.

- Travelling to Stornoway at such a young age is disgraceful.
- Pupils will miss Lionel and there might be cruel things happen in The Nicolson Institute.
- Lionel School has smaller classes and so pupils receive more individual attention from the teacher.
- Lionel is closer to our homes and so we get home earlier to do homework or other things.
- More exposed to things (e.g. smoking) in The Nicolson Institute plus peer pressure and easier to give in, the younger you are.
- At The Nicolson Institute pupils rush around to find classes, but not in Lionel.
- After S1 and S2 in Lionel, things are easier in S3 because you’ve had the chance to get used to secondary in a smaller school.
- In Lionel, practical lessons are easier because the teacher can show you what to do. Also, we have double periods and in The Nicolson Institute they only have one.
- In The Nicolson Institute you could be a target of bullies at the younger stages.
- We have healthier lunches in Lionel. There’s no chance to go down town to buy junk food.
- Our lunches in Lionel are better because we have no queues and so more time to eat our meal without rushing.
- In The Nicolson Institute there are risks if you’re on your own in town at lunch-time.
- Teachers have more control over classes in Lionel so pupils don’t get distracted.
- We would be further away from home and our parents if anything happens to you in school.
- You would be more likely to pick up bad habits in The Nicolson Institute, such as swearing and bad language.
- Some people get travel sick. A long journey twice a day will make them really unwell.
- In The Nicolson Institute S1/S2, classes will have some pupils who don’t want to do certain subjects so they will be more disruptive.
- We get more time in Lionel to finish our work. Because of the timetable in The Nicolson Institute we would have to move on quickly as other classes come in.
- There’s more homework in The Nicolson Institute, and that is more stressful.
- There are other learning advantages. For example, we have more time in Lionel to practise with teacher.
- The Nicolson Institute canteen is cramped but there is plenty of space in Lionel.
- The Nicolson Institute school bus in the afternoon is a public bus and is very cramped and also with adults and S6 it is very intimidating for younger children.
- People with specific needs in Lionel are treated very well because everyone knows them. But they may not know them in The Nicolson Institute.
- Some children would have to walk a longer distance home from The Nicolson Institute bus drop-off/stop and, in the winter, it’s colder and darker.
- Pupils would have long days travelling and, especially in the winter, this might make you feel horrible.
- The Nicolson Institute might make you feel anxious and insecure because there are lots of people you don’t know.
- S1 and S2 pupils would need to start making new friends all over again. This is much harder if you don’t know anybody.
- Going to The Nicolson Institute at S3 you have more respect and would not be ignored by others.
- Everyone helps in Lionel if you see someone who is hurt.

- Some pupils would be scared in case the work is harder in The Nicolson Institute.
- People with specific needs in Lionel can go on trips e.g. local shops to learn how to buy things, but that might not happen in The Nicolson Institute.
- In Lionel you have the freedom to go to the toilet whenever you want – but in The Nicolson Institute, toilets are locked and you need to ask a teacher and sign for a key.
- We could lose touch with Lionel friends if they're in different classes and could be alone if you find it difficult to socialise and make friends.
- There would need to be a later bus home from The Nicolson Institute for after school clubs. It is much easier in Lionel now. We would have to stay in town and wait for the bus.
- Lionel might be better without the secondary classes, if it was just primary.
- Now, when school closes early on a Friday, The Nicolson Institute pupils have to wait – but Lionel pupils can get straight home.
- Lionel pupils will get home later when it is dark and cold and so cannot access beaches or play-park after school.

RESPONSE:

These issues were discussed with the pupils and, where possible, answers were provided. All pupils were advised that trips, sports and the Mod competitions would all continue and they would have the opportunity for participation.

Areas where the Comhairle might help if the proposal goes ahead, according to pupils;

- Put Lionel pupils all in the same class;
- Stop people from going down the town;
- Make the school bus trip shorter.

RESPONSE:

- Most of the suggestions provided by pupils were reasonable and an undertaking was given that should the proposal be accepted, there would be further discussion with the pupils in order to prepare a transition plan.
- This summary provides an overview of the comments received from pupils regarding the proposal. It is an accurate reflection of the meeting held. Certain comments however do not represent factual information relating to travel time and the behaviour of pupils. School and transport staff do not tolerate poor behaviour and incidents, should they occur, are addressed. There are no restrictions on access to toilets at The Nicolson Institute.

Summary of Consultation with The Nicolson Institute pupils (different age and stage) as the receiving school.

Views expressed:

- I think Lionel School should stay open.
- If it's a part of the community – the people would want to keep it open.
- Lionel only has 8 pupils – so that's a disadvantage. This is a reason to close it.
- Teachers focus more (on individuals) when it's a small group. Pupils get more one-to-one support.
- Lionel is the only one small school left – so they might feel left out when they come to The Nicolson Institute. It is therefore better if they all come to S1.
- Without Shawbost, Lochs, Back – it's a disadvantage to Lionel because fewer teachers go out to the school.
- Such an early start may be too much for children at the end of P7.
- It is easier for 8 pupils just to come to The Nicolson Institute and use the secondary department at Lionel for other things – or to have better primary facilities.
- Teachers don't know the pupils when they arrive in S3 and they might have done different work.
- It is much better for young children to get more sleep – when they're that age, so staying in Lionel would be better.

- The buses from Ness are full already, so there will not be room for more to come to town.
- Quality of education in Lionel is the same as The Nicolson Institute.
- There are the same facilities in Lionel and The Nicolson Institute.
- Pupils attending Lionel have an easy introduction to secondary school.
- Parents may have been put off by uncertainty of closure. That's why they sent their children straight to The Nicolson Institute.
- Parents in Lionel were complaining about the teachers – but teachers can change.
- Some children can be overwhelmed by The Nicolson Institute.
- In a S1/S2 school, the pupils mix with people in their own area and they get to know them better.
- If they come straight to S1 there will be more chance to make friends.
- Lionel S1/S2 is the only small secondary left on the Western Isles and so should close.
- It would be different if Shawbost, Lochs, Back were still open – but S1/S2 schools don't have much support now.
- It all comes down to saving money.
- There is a lack of specialist teachers and that means the quality of education is not as good.

RESPONSE:

These issues were discussed with the pupils and where possible answers provided.

Areas where the Comhairle might help if the proposal goes ahead, according to pupils:

- Longer transition;
- Teachers to attend transition days along with pupils;
- Teachers from The Nicolson Institute could go out to S1/2 school for Meet the Teacher Days;
- Pupils from The Nicolson Institute could visit the S1/2 classes;
- Teachers from The Nicolson Institute should go into S1/2 classes and deliver lessons in previous session;
- Buddies could be in place, in the children's own year group rather than from senior classes;
- Ensure equal spread of rural pupils throughout Nicolson Institute classes;
- Use special activities to ensure pupils mix;
- Pupils to be shown round by previous S3 class;
- Entertainment on buses to alleviate boredom/trouble during travel time;
- Detailed maps of school provided for new pupils;
- Quiet place available for pupils to go if feeling isolated;
- More homework in P7 to prepare pupils for change.

RESPONSE:

- Most of the suggestions provided by pupils were reasonable and an undertaking was given that should the proposal be accepted, there would be further discussion with the pupils in order to prepare a transition plan.
- This summary provides an overview of the comments received from pupils regarding the proposal. It is an accurate reflection of the meeting held. Certain comments however do not represent factual information relating to travel time and the behaviour of pupils. The travel of pupils from Ness and elsewhere throughout the islands is consistent with the Comhairle's Home to School Travel Policy. School and transport staff do not tolerate poor behaviour and incidents, should they occur, are addressed.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION WITH STAFF

- 9.1 All teaching and non-teaching staff were invited to attend consultations regarding the Comhairle's proposals. The staff made the following observations, which they wished to be recorded.
- 9.2 Lionel Staff Consultation 30th September 2014 - 6 staff.

"You will be aware that the Education & Children's Services department is consulting pupils, staff, parents and the public on the possible closure of Lionel secondary in June 2015. I'm here to take a note of your views, then to report these views to the department."

9.3 The staff at Lionel School made the following observations, which they wished to be recorded.

- No strong opinion either way
- Totally against the proposal for lots of reasons. It is robbing children of their last years of childhood when they are still immature and too young to be going to The Nicolson Institute, some may be ready, others not. There are much larger classes at The Nicolson Institute. In smaller classes can see where child needs support.
- Pupils can be lost, they will become just a number in a large school.
- Lionel pupils will have long hours, early mornings and late afternoons.
- Children who have had S1/S2 in Lionel have had a very good deal.
- The Comhairle's approved travel time is now 80 minutes. This has changed since the last consultation.
- How would people react if they were told their offices were to be in Ness – but they still expect 11 year olds to make that journey.
- Problems even getting supply teachers to Ness and also problems getting supply even in The Nicolson Institute.
- Distance and travel is an issue. It will be a long day as some children will need to leave home at 7:30am.
- There is a 15 minute waiting time in Barvas while people wait for town bus to arrive.
- Children with ASN need to be considered. There is a concern about transport, care and welfare, distance from home and transition. We would want them to be able to access the care they receive in Lionel.
- A vulnerable child in Lionel will be more obvious than in a larger school.
- There are high noise levels in The Nicolson Institute for children with additional needs.
- There is perception of an 'aggressive' vibe in The Nicolson Institute corridors.
- The 8 pupils in Lionel secondary are close, friendly, and next year there will be almost twice that number.
- The document says it costs £34,000 to educate a child in Lionel secondary. What is the breakdown of £34,000 per pupil?
- I don't believe it's any better in The Nicolson Institute.
- My older daughter in The Nicolson Institute and has enjoyed it very much.
- Pupils have made friends in Lionel and will be in the same class as their friends, but there is no guarantee that this is the case in The Nicolson Institute.
- There is a long list of extra-curricular activities in The Nicolson Institute, which can also be done at Lionel.
- Children seem more tired since the start of the asymmetric week.
- On the public bus there have been incidents of loud swearing and bad behaviour.

9.4 The Nicolson Institute Staff Consultation 6 October 2014 - 5 staff.

"You might know that the Education & Children's Services Department is consulting pupils, staff, parents and the public on the possible closure of Lionel secondary in June 2015. I'm here to take a note of your views, then to report these views to the department."

9.5 The staff at the Nicolson Institute made the following observations, which they wished to be recorded.

- Council downplayed valuable part played by S1/S2 schools. Need to consult properly. Need to address issue of more breaks in The Nicolson Institute as they've travelled long distances.
- From pupils' point of view in Lionel there are a number of advantages including smaller class sizes, more opportunities for inter-disciplinary learning, tracking and monitoring. The facilities in Lionel are very good.
- From the pupils' point of view there are a number of negatives about S1/S2 provision, including the fact that the class is really just an extension of primary. They have the same teacher all day. It's more difficult to motivate small numbers.
- Even with S1 and S2 classes combined pupil numbers are still too small.
- It was difficult to motivate and challenge pupils with such small numbers– even with very able pupils simply because they have no competition.
- In The Nicolson Institute there is specialist input from S1 and more Gaelic Medium.
- There is also an advantage when S1 pupils start school with all other S1's. When pupils join from Lionel it is hard to join an established S3 group. The Nicolson Institute has more electives and more extra-curricular opportunities.

- All pupils travel long distances and as such would benefit from a 10 minute breakfast club break at the start of the day.
- It is important that pupils only have one transition (P7 – S1). It is often the case that S3 pupils regress at the start of S3. There needs to be a consistent approach across all S1 to S3. Teaching staff have gained a great deal from being in a larger group within departments and as part of a larger school. In this way they can share ideas, assess work more consistently and moderate evaluations together. Teachers benefit from the support and guidance of an experienced Principal Teacher in their subjects. At The Nicolson Institute we can meet formally and informally and this helps us to ensure consistency in the quality of learning.
- With only 8 pupils in Lionel it's too small and hard to get anything going.
- I have taught in both Lionel and The Nicolson Institute and so I do understand parents' concerns, but it's a myth, because kids can eat in school. This culture of fear that is being perpetrated is not true.
- Some larger classes in Lionel Primary are dynamic so the pupils are ready for The Nicolson Institute S1.
- Being so remote, it is perhaps easy to forget that others across the country are travelling for much longer – including pupils with special needs.
- If it is kept open, Lionel secondary could be a 'hub' – for Ness senior pupils to use as a study centre – using the facilities.
- Pupils do enjoy working with smaller groups and doing different subjects because it can often be less formal and more relaxed.
- Some pupils are in their element in a small school – but would struggle in The Nicolson Institute. It's a luxury having S1/S2 provision. Working in a very small school teaching staff can miss the stimulation of a larger school.

RESPONSE:

- Most of the suggestions provided by staff were reasonable and an undertaking was given that should the proposal be accepted, there would be further discussion with staff and pupils in order to prepare a transition plan.
- This summary provides an overview of the comments received from staff regarding the proposal. It is an accurate reflection of the meetings held. Certain comments however do not represent factual information relating to travel time and the behaviour of pupils. For example, waiting time of buses at Barvas is up to one or two minutes not 15 minutes as indicated in the meeting and the travel time for pupils from Ness and elsewhere throughout the islands is consistent with the Comhairle's Home to School Travel Policy. School and transport staff do not tolerate poor behaviour and incidents, should they occur, are addressed.

CONCLUSION

10.1 Throughout this consultation the Comhairle has given special regard to the provision for rural schools within Section 12 of the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010. In particular, the Comhairle has given regard to -

- any viable alternative to the closure proposal. The alternatives are reviewed on pages 16 and 17 and examination has indicated that available options would not deliver the educational benefits of the proposal.
- the likely effect on the local community in consequence of the proposal (if implemented), with reference in particular to;
 - (a) the sustainability of the community,
 - (b) the availability of the school's premises and its other facilities for use by the community.

The potential impact of the proposal, if implemented, is considered on pages 7 and 8 and examination has indicated that the continuation of the primary school and the continued availability of the school premises and adjacent facilities would result in minimal impact on the sustainability of the community.

- the likely effect caused by any different travelling arrangements that may be required in consequence of the proposal (if implemented) with reference in particular to
 - (a) the effect caused by such travelling arrangements including (in particular),
 - (i) that on the school's pupils and staff and any other users of the school's facilities,
 - (ii) any environmental impact,
 - (b) the travelling arrangements are those to and from the school of (and for) the school's pupils and staff and any other users of the school's facilities.

10.2 The impact of the implementation of the proposal in relation to travel time is considered on pages 13 and 14. The proposal would, if implemented, lead to increased travel time for pupils. The Comhairle has already implemented certain strategies to help minimise the resulting travel time for pupils. A transition plan, involving staff, pupils and parent will assist in addressing concerns raised by parents, in particular in relation to access to extra-curricular activities, safety on buses and travel times. As the S1/S2 pupils will be travelling on existing transport provision there will be no environmental impact as a consequence of the proposal being implemented.

10.3 In recognition of the impact of the school closures on local communities, the Comhairle undertook, in addition to statutory consultation, a community conversation in order to share with stakeholders the challenges for education, together with its aspirations for a review of educational provision designed to provide 'Quality Education in Quality Buildings'.

10.4 The consultation process was robust and provided an opportunity for all stakeholders to identify key issues of concern. These issues have been fully considered and the Comhairle's response detailed in sections 6, 7, 8 and 9 above.

10.5 The Standards in Schools (Scotland) Act 2000 requires local authorities "to secure that the education is directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest potential". (para 2.1). As stated on pages 8-11 of this Consultation Report, the benefits of the proposal are primarily educational. The curriculum will be enhanced and there will be wider range of options available to S1 and S2 pupils. The proposal, if approved, will give pupils access to specialised staff, including senior staff. It will provide pupils with regular access to opportunities to learn with a larger group of peers. These educational benefits will in turn contribute to the personal and social development of pupils.

10.6 HMI visited Lionel School (S1-2) to speak to parents, pupils and staff. They attended the public meeting on 30 September 2014 and had the opportunity to review in detail the proposal document and all written responses.

10.7 In summary, the Education Scotland (HMI) Report recognises the merits of the closure proposal. The report states;

"Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has set out a clear case for the overall educational benefit of the proposal."

10.8 The Education Scotland (HMI) report provides evidence that the proposal to amalgamate Lionel School (S1-2) with The Nicolson Institute will lead to educational benefits. In the summary section of the report, HMI state;

"If the proposal is implemented, young people moving to The Nicolson Institute would benefit from an improved curriculum, a larger peer group and access to high-quality resources, including for those who require additional support with their learning. In addition, children will benefit from an improved learning environment".

10.9 HMI also report that the proposal, if implemented, will have other broader benefits. In the summary section of the report HMI state;

"The proposal will also help the council meet its duty to secure best value in the delivery of its services, including the more efficient deployment of specialist teachers and senior managers".

- 10.10 The Director of Education and Children’s Services, on reviewing all of the submissions, having further considered the special “rural school” factors, the HMI report and the Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix C) recommends that the best and most sustainable educational provision for the current catchment area of Lionel School (S1/2) would be provided at The Nicolson Institute and that the education provision should be discontinued at Lionel School (S1-2) from 26 June 2015.
- 10.11 The Director of Education and Children’s Services recommends that a transfer of pupils from Lionel School (S1/2) to The Nicolson Institute will have educational benefits and that the learning opportunities and experience for pupils will be significantly widened. There will be:
- increased opportunities for pupils, both curricular and extra-curricular activities;
 - greater flexibility in grouping children for learning and teaching;
 - greater flexibility in the deployment of staff to meet learning needs;
 - a larger staff will offer a wider range of expertise resulting in increased opportunities for sharing effective practice, more collegiate support and a wider range of learning and teaching approaches;
 - more management support to promote school improvement.
- 10.12 Pupils and parents of Lionel School (S1-2) would have access to a modern educational establishment, which is fully equipped and designed to meet the needs of pupils and fully deliver a Curriculum for Excellence. There is an opportunity for the pupils, staff and parents of both schools to benefit from working together to ensure that the very best quality of learning and teaching is available to all pupils, irrespective of their needs or abilities.
- 10.13 The proposal will result in pupils at Lionel School (S1-2) attending a building that is modern and better designed for the delivery of a 21st Century curriculum.
- 10.14 Whilst this proposal is not based on financial grounds, if implemented, the closure of Lionel School (S1/S2) would lead to improved efficiency within the Department of Education and Children’s Services.
- 10.15 Should the proposal be approved the Director of Education and Children’s Services will work with parents and staff in Lionel and The Nicolson Institute to develop a transition plan that will ensure an effective transition for pupils and staff to The Nicolson Institute.

RECOMMENDATION

- 11.1 It is recommended that:
- a) the S1/S2 education provision at Lionel School be discontinued with effect from 26 June 2015; and
 - b) the pupils of S1/S2 at Lionel School continue their education at The Nicolson Institute, from 13 August 2015.