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**Education and Children's Services Department**

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**Review of Education Provision**  
**at**  
**CARINISH SCHOOL**  
**LOCHMADDY SCHOOL**  
**PAIBLE SCHOOL**  
**Isle of North Uist**

**CONSULTATION REPORT**  
**JANUARY 2014**

Roinn an Fhoghlaim is Seirbheisean Chloinne

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**CONSULTATION REPORT FOR CARINISH, LOCHMADDY AND PAIBLE SCHOOLS**  
**Isle of North Uist**

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## **Review of Education Provision at Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible Schools, Isle of North Uist Consultation Report**

**Report by Director of Education and Children's Services**

### **CONSIDER THE PROPOSAL THAT :**

- **Education provision at Carinish School be discontinued with effect from 26 June 2015 or such later date as the Director of Education and Children's Services shall determine following service availability of the new North Uist Primary School.**
- **Education provision at Lochmaddy School be discontinued with effect from 26 June 2015 or such later date as the Director of Education and Children's Services shall determine following service availability of the new North Uist Primary School.**
- **Education provision at Paible School be discontinued with effect from 26 June 2015 or such later date as the Director of Education and Children's Services shall determine following service availability of the new North Uist Primary School.**
- **A new North Uist Primary School be established on the existing school site at Paible, Isle of North Uist, from 13 August 2015 or such later date as the Director of Education and Children's Services shall determine following service availability of the new school and the pupils of Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible Schools continue their education there.**
- **The catchment area of the new North Uist Primary School be extended to include the current catchment areas of Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible Primary Schools.**
- **The new North Uist Primary School will include provision for statutory pre-school education.**

### **BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Comhairle, at its Meeting on 12 September 2013, 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 affected by the proposal regarding the closure of Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible Schools as required by the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010.
- 1.2 This decision relates to the implementation of the Strategy for the Future Provision of Education in the Western Isles. The Comhairle is required to provide its statutory services as effectively and efficiently as possible. It is therefore necessary to be strategic in the delivery of education to ensure Best Value. School rolls in the Authority as a whole have been falling year on year for the last thirty years and this, based on population projections, is a continuing trend. This trend has resulted in there being more buildings in the school estate than are considered necessary for the delivery of high quality education.

- 1.3 In order to ensure appropriate investment in education at a time of financial challenges it is necessary that the Comhairle make the most efficient use of its finances and resources. The current level of over-capacity in schools combined with the high maintenance costs and poor condition of many of the school buildings throughout the Western Isles is a significant drain on resources and presents a major obstacle to investment in education and school buildings.
- 1.4 Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible Schools are designated as very remote rural schools. 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 as a result of a decision approved by the Comhairle 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 26 September 2013 and the consultation ran thereafter for a period of 32 school days until 22 November 2013.
  - Public meetings were held on Tuesday, 29 October and Wednesday, 30 October 2013.
  - Pupils and staff were also consulted separately.
  - HMI involvement included being sent a copy of the proposal document 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 statutory requirements, 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 Lochmaddy School on 29 October 2013.
  - Public meeting at Paible School on 30 October 2013.
  - Public Meeting at Carinish School on 30 October 2013
  - Meeting with staff at Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible Schools separately
  - Meeting with pupils at Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible Schools separately.

## OMISSIONS AND INACCURACIES

- 4.1 Within the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 there is guidance on how errors or omissions should be addressed. Some inaccuracies were discovered in the Proposal Document as detailed below. A letter dated 30 September 2013 was sent to parents and notification to all other consultees informing them of this error and a correction notice was placed on the Comhairle’s website.
- 4.2 Where reference in the Proposal Document is made to HMIE (Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education), this should read ‘Education Scotland’. HMIE are now part of the recently established Education Scotland.
- 4.3 In reference to staffing, the correct information for Sections 10.5 and 10.6 is as follows

### Staffing

#### Teaching Staff

The teaching staff complement at **Carinish School** is 1.5 FTE teachers and 0.17 FTE itinerant teachers, giving an overall complement of 1.67 FTE staff. Itinerant staff would be given revised timetables in line with the current deployment of specialist itinerant teachers.

The teaching staff complement at **Lochmaddy School** is 2.7 FTE teachers and 0.15 FTE itinerant teachers, giving an overall complement of 2.85 FTE staff. Itinerant staff would be given revised timetables in line with the current deployment of specialist itinerant teachers. The school has a shared headship arrangement with Paible School.

## REPRESENTATIONS

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

| Representations from:              | Number     |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| • Member of the Community          | 101        |
| • Carinish Parent Council          | 1          |
| • North Uist Development Company   | 1          |
| • North Uist Community Council     | 1          |
| • Berneray Community Council       | 1          |
| • Angus Brendan MacNeil MP         | 2          |
| • Urachadh Uibhist                 | 2          |
| • Highlands and Islands Enterprise | 1          |
| • Voting Slips (Lochmaddy Options) | 32         |
| <b>Total:</b>                      | <b>142</b> |

## SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS AND COMHAIRLE RESPONSES

- 6.1 This section details the relevant points raised at public meetings 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.
- 6.2 The responses to the issues raised are detailed below.

| NURSERY PROVISION  |
|--|
| <p><b>ISSUE:</b> Concern has been expressed that the new school proposal recommends providing statutory pre-school provision and not the extended service encompassing 0-3 years childcare, before and after school, and during school holidays as is currently available. There is also concern that if the Comhairle provide nursery provision at the proposed new school, this would have a detrimental effect on the business of Saoghal Beag nursery.</p> <p><b>RESPONSE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The consultation proposal recommends provision of statutory pre-school education (3-5 years, 600 hours funded provision) in the new school. Such provision could be delivered by either the Comhairle or Urachadh Uibhist through the Saoghal Beag Nursery and this will form part of the further discussions referred to below.</li> </ul> |

- Birth to 3 years provision is not a statutory requirement and was therefore not included within the proposal document.
- All 0-5 provision is provided within the Comhairle's Early Years and Early Intervention Strategy and decisions in relation to provision are subject to local consultation and the meeting of viability criteria.
- Urachadh Uibhist through the Saoghal Beag Nursery is the major provider of childcare and early years provision in North Uist. However, the viability of this service has been the subject of ongoing discussion with the provider. Recent adjustments have been made by the Provider in terms of the provision to improve viability and an undertaking provided by the authority that sustainability funding would be provided until June 2014.
- On this basis Urachadh Uibhist has raised with the authority proposals for a variation to provision in North Uist including a Public Service Partnership model, direct management of childcare and pre-school services within the new school or a proposal whereby pre-school provision is provided within the new school and childcare provision at the existing Saoghal Beag facility. These proposals will be subject to further discussion with Urachadh Uibhist.
- On 4 October 2013 the Director of Education and Children's Services wrote to Urachadh Uibhist agreeing to meet with them to discuss their proposals in relation to child care and the potential for a Public Sector Partnership.
- The design of the new school currently incorporates accommodation provision for 0-5 years in Gaelic and English.
- However, as with all provision in the Western Isles the final design will be determined by needs, viability and compliance with the objectives of the Early Years Strategy.
- The authority's aspiration is to ensure that there are appropriate facilities and services available to the community which are viable and sustainable in the longer term.

#### PAIBLE AS A SITE FOR THE NEW SCHOOL

**ISSUE:** Why has the Comhairle failed to meet its promise to build the new school on a neutral site at Clachan as agreed at the public meeting in January 2013?

**RESPONSE:**

- The Comhairle did not agree to build the new school at the Clachan site on 9 January 2013.
- The Community Conversation held on 9 January 2013 was to provide all members of the community with an opportunity to discuss future education provision in North Uist, ask questions and engage in a discussion with Comhairle members and officials on a range of proposals and have access to relevant background information.
- The meeting considered, through focus group discussions, the benefits of retaining the status quo, amalgamating three schools into a new school building and consideration of the location. Feedback from the groups recognised the benefits of amalgamation outweighing any disadvantages. In relation to location, the following were identified; Paible, Clachan or surrounding area, another site preferably equidistant between the current three schools.
- Based on there being consensus in this forum the Chief Executive undertook to submit a report to the Education and Children's Services Committee and the Policy and Resources Committee of the Comhairle in February and March 2013 respectively recommending statutory consultation on the proposal of a new school for North Uist on the basis that capital could be identified.
- The Comhairle undertook an option appraisal in relation to 12 sites of which, using agreed criteria, 3 were subject to full evaluation. Site A - the existing Paible School, Site D - Claddach Illeray Common Grazings and Site G - South of Clachan near Carinish Hall. The option appraisal report is a public document and available on the Comhairle's website [Option appraisal reports to Committee](#). In particular, sections 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the report provided detailed information in relation to costs and the criteria considered in determining the final site selection at Paible.

**ISSUE:** The existing school at Paible is low lying and under flood risk.

**RESPONSE:**

- Based on current and past data the area within the site boundary at Paible is not at risk of flooding.
- The Comhairle as part of the site appraisals examined the flood risk plans from SEPA to determine the flood risk. None of the final three sites appear on the SEPA register.
- At the Lochmaddy School public consultation meeting the Comhairle's Head of Assets and Infrastructure stated that the flood risk plans from SEPA have been modelled on a 1 in 200 years flood risk. Any perceived risk of flooding would be on the access roads but not significant enough to close the schools on a frequent basis.
- There is a flood risk on the shore line opposite the existing school and at the junction with the A865 by the Bayhead Shop. However, in the apparently unlikely event of severe flooding in these areas the school would be safely evacuated around the Paible circular road.

**ISSUE:** A more equidistant site in North Uist such as Sollas could be chosen if all the children from Grimsay were to attend Balivanich School.

**RESPONSE:**

- For all potential sites, including Site L Sollas, the Building Projects Team from Technical Services at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar considered the following factors; Flood Risk, Utilities, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Access, Archaeology, Planning Restrictions and Statutory Consent, and the project brief.
- For 'Site L' the report states that "The site measures well against the technical criteria. There would be no technical reason not to pursue this site further at this stage. However, it should be noted that the Comhairle's Transport Manager has commented that this site is not likely to be efficient from a schools transportation perspective."
- The option of locating of the new school within the Sollas area would result in extended school transport journeys for pupils living within Grimsay Island and Claddach Carinish estimated from 35 to 45 minutes each way which would exceed the target maximum durations contained within the School Transport Policy. [Home to School Transport Policy](#)
- The Community Conversation and consultation did not evidence a demand to change the existing school catchment areas and therefore the location at Paible is the most central.
- Berneray Community Council submission made this suggestion. However there was no support for this demonstrated at either the community conversation or the consultation by the parents in Carinish and Grimsay who would be directly affected.

**ISSUE:** Building on the site of an existing school causes significant disruption to the education of the pupils at that school.

**RESPONSE:**

- Building on a school site can cause some disruption. However, recent experience in building Daliburgh School, Sir E Scott School and The Nicolson Institute on existing sites indicates that this can be managed successfully without major disruption to children's learning and education provision in general.

**ISSUE:** A school on the existing site at Paible would have limited broadband capabilities compared to one near Clachan.

**RESPONSE:**

- There will be no difference in broadband speed between the sites at Paible and Clachan.
- Currently all schools' broadband (apart from The Nicolson Institute which has a direct fibre link to the LA network) is delivered by the Connected Communities network. Five Uist schools including Paible and Carinish have an 8Mbps link, Lochmaddy has a 4Mbps link and Sgoil Lionacleit has a 12Mbps link.
- Looking to the future, the Scottish Government, through the Scottish Wide Area Network (SWAN), is currently coming to the conclusion of a tendering exercise for a new Public Sector network that will also include provision for all schools in the Western Isles from September 2016 onwards.
- Once this process is complete, the preferred supplier will be meeting with each Local Authority to discuss the specific requirements of their sites including all schools, and will outline plans and timescales for individual sites.

**TRANSPORT**

**ISSUE:** Travelling times would increase for pupils of the other two schools, and some pupils would be on the bus for a very long time.

**RESPONSE:**

- Travelling times will increase for some pupils as a result of this proposal. However, this would be true regardless of the site chosen.
- The Comhairle 'Home School Transport' policy [Home to School Transport Policy](#) states that the "Comhairle will aim to limit all journeys for primary pupils to no more than 40 minutes".
- It is accepted that children travelling to the proposed new school from the island of Grimsay could have a journey towards the upper limits of the Comhairle policy.
- However, consistent with previous practice, reasonable steps would be taken to minimise pupils' journey time.
- The Comhairle has committed to looking at solutions, in the context of the tendering specification of new bus service contracts from April 2015, which would reduce travelling time for pupils from the more distant areas by using minibuses and/or taxis to take pupils to identified pick-up points so that travel to and from school would be as direct as possible.
- The Western Isles, in the interests of efficiency and services for the public, supports an integrated transport arrangement. This has operated for a period of approximately 14 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. This service was reviewed in 1999 and was the subject of a Best Value Review in 2008.
- 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.
- In order to ensure a better travel experience, all service-providers are required to provide coaches rather than buses, and all children and young people will have individual seats.

### CLOSURE OF LOCHMADDY SCHOOL

**ISSUE:** Lochmaddy has more to offer in terms of amenities at Lochmaddy compared to Paible.

**RESPONSE:**

- Two potential sites were initially identified for appraisal as possible location of the new North Uist School in the Lochmaddy area.
- For all potential sites, including 'Site J' Lochmaddy School and 'Site K' - Lochmaddy Hospital, the Building Projects Team Technical Services at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar considered the following factors; Flood Risk, Utilities, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Access, Archaeology, Planning Restrictions and Statutory Consent, and the project brief.
- For 'Site J', the report states that "It would not be recommended to pursue this site as a viable option due to the limited area available and the risk posed by flood, SSSI and the topography of the site."
- For 'Site K', the report states that "Due to the issues with access to the site and the unsuitability of the access road for heavy traffic, it would not be recommended to pursue this site further at this stage."

### FINANCE

**ISSUE:** It is stated that the Paible site is cheaper by £400k, but £200k is included in the cost of a Greenfield site to equip the Paible pitch with changing facilities. This should not be part of the costs

**RESPONSE:**

- If a green field site were chosen and the existing building at Paible demolished and the current changing facilities no longer being available, it would be reasonable to assume that the community would wish a similar standard of changing facility to that being established elsewhere in the Western Isles. This would represent a real cost to the Comhairle and has therefore been factored in.

### 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 Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible Schools and the transfer of pupils to a New North Uist School. This report is attached as Appendix D.
- 7.2 The Report also identifies issues for consideration by the Comhairle as follows.

### HMI REPORT

**ISSUE:** The Comhairle needs to provide clearer information on the costs and potential savings of the different site options.

**RESPONSE:**

- The Comhairle undertook an option appraisal in relation to 12 sites of which, using agreed criteria, 3 were subject to full evaluation. **Site A** existing Paible School, **Site D** Claddach Illeray Common Grazings and **Site G** South of Clachan near Carinish Hall. The option appraisal report is a public document and available on the Comhairle's website [Options appraisal reports](#). In particular, sections 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 provide detailed information in relation to costs and criteria considered in determining the final site selection at Paible.
- The costs below are indicative estimates only, and detailed cost analysis will be undertaken following the development of a detailed design and build programme.

- The indicative costs are high level estimates and based on appendices 3, 4 and 5 within the Option Appraisal Report.
- Costs include provision of all construction components to provide a functioning school: new school building, all-weather games area, PE changing rooms, multi-use games areas, roads, car park, hard and soft landscaping, drainage and external services complete.
- Costs are calculated using a square metre rate based on data from the WISP schools at Balivanich, Daliburgh, Point and West Side. The baseline £/m<sup>2</sup> was adjusted for site factors and location and then updated for inflation to December 2014 (indicative mid-construction point at the time).
- Specific site costs vary due to ground conditions (as identified in the Site Investigation Report of the Options Appraisal Reports).

|  | Site A<br>Paible | Site D<br>Claddach<br>Illeray | Site G<br>Carinish |
|--|------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| Construction of new building primary – all                   | 6 560 000        | 6 580 000                     | 6 660 000          |
| Changing facility at Paible (D, G)                           |                  | 200 000                       | 200 000            |
| Demolition of Paible School (A)                              | 150 000          |                               |                    |
| Contingency (approx 10%)                                     | 670 000          | 680 000                       | 680 000            |
| Land acquisition   | -                | 100 000                       | 100 000            |
| Scottish Water infrastructure                                | -                | 250 000                       | 350 000            |
| Hydro Electric infrastructure                                | -                | 20 000                        | 20 000             |
| Furniture, fittings and equipment                            | 150 000          | 150 000                       | 150 000            |
| Professional and statutory fees (approx 12% on construction) | 890 000          | 895 000                       | 900 000            |
|  |                  |                               |                    |
| <b>Total £</b>   | <b>8 420 000</b> | <b>£8 875 000</b>             | <b>£9 060 000</b>  |

**ISSUE:** The financial case needs to be set out more clearly, including any impact of the implementation of the proposal on the Comhairle's budget through the General Revenue Grant.

**RESPONSE:**

- The school estate review, including the North Uist proposal, is principally based on educational benefits, improved school estate, pupil numbers and the overall viability and sustainability of education provision in remote rural areas.
- The Comhairle has considered the impact the transfer of pupils from Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible Schools to the new North Uist Primary School will have on the funding it receives from the Scottish Government through Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) assessments and the distribution mechanism. The transfer to the North Uist School will result in the closure of three small rural schools and the opening of one new school, which will have a projected roll of 73. As this exceeds 70 (which is the size below which the school is considered to be a small rural school) there will be a reduction in the funding the Comhairle receives through GAE for primary schools, estimated at £214k. However, the Comhairle will not see any reduction in funding as this would be entirely offset by the floor mechanism. Census projections indicate the population of North Uist children will continue to reduce and it is likely that the school will fall back into the category of a small rural school at some time in the future. Again, this will have no net impact on Comhairle funding. The Specific Grant for Gaelic and free school meal entitlement are not expected to change if the proposal is agreed.

- In respect of future capital expenditure the Comhairle anticipates that approximately £648K would be required to be spent on Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible Schools to address the maintenance backlog and a further £125K required to meet DDA requirements at the schools. These costs are purely to address current building fabric and statutory deficiencies and make no allowance for additional facilities or modifications required to make the schools suitable for future compliance with the Curriculum for Excellence requirements.
- On this basis any effect on the Comhairle's overall GAE allocation to education would be negligible.

**ISSUE:** In taking forward the proposal, the Comhairle needs to engage further with the parents of the pre-school children and nursery providers to address their very reasonable concerns.

**RESPONSE:**

- The consultation proposal recommends provision of statutory pre-school education (3-5 years, 600 hours funded provision).
- Birth to 3 years provision is not a statutory requirement and was therefore not included within the proposal document.
- All Early Years provision is provided within the Comhairle's Early Years and Early Intervention Strategy and decisions in relation to provision is subject to local consultation and the meeting of viability criteria.
- Urachadh Uibhist through the Saoghal Beag Nursery is the major provider of childcare and early years provision in North Uist. However, the viability of this service has been the subject of ongoing discussion with the provider. Recent adjustments have been made by the Provider in terms of the provision to improve viability and an undertaking provided by the authority that sustainability funding would be provided until June 2014.
- On this basis Urachadh Uibhist has raised with the authority proposals for a variation to provision in North Uist including a Public Service Partnership model, direct management of childcare and pre-school services within the new school or a proposal whereby pre-school provision is provided within the new school and childcare provision at the existing Saoghal Beag facility. These proposals will be subject to further discussion with Urachadh Uibhist.
- On 4 October 2013 the Director of Education and Children's Services wrote to Urachadh Uibhist agreeing to meet with them to discuss their proposals in relation to child care and the potential for a Public Sector Partnership.
- The design of the new school currently incorporates accommodation provision for 0-5 years in Gaelic and English.
- However, as with all provision in the Western Isles the final design will be determined by needs, viability and compliance with the objectives of the Early Years Strategy.
- The authority's aspiration is to ensure that there are appropriate facilities and services available to the community which are viable and sustainable in the longer term.
- As with other new school builds a Reference Group will be established including parents, pupils and staff.

**ISSUE:** The council, in its review of transport for the proposed new school, needs to assess carefully the impact of its travel arrangements for very young children when making its final decision about this proposal. It should also address the parents' concerns over severe weather travel arrangements and the use of public transport.

**RESPONSE:**

- Travelling times will increase for some pupils as a result of this proposal. However, this would be true regardless of the site chosen.
- The Comhairle 'Home School Transport' policy [Home to School Transport Policy](#) states that the "Comhairle will aim to limit all journeys for primary pupils to no more than 40 minutes".
- It is accepted that children travelling to the proposed new school from the island of Grimsay could have a journey towards the upper limits of the Comhairle policy.
- However, consistent with previous consultation practice, reasonable steps would be taken to minimise pupils' journey time.
- The Comhairle has committed to looking at solutions, in the context of the tendering specification of new bus service contracts from April 2015, which would reduce travelling time for pupils from the more distant areas by using minibuses and/or taxis to take pupils to identified pick-up points so that travel to and from school would be as direct as possible.
- The Western Isles, in the interests of efficiency and services for the public, supports an integrated transport arrangement. This has operated for a period of approximately 14 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. This service was reviewed in 1999 and was the subject of a Best Value Review in 2008.
- 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.
- In order to ensure a better travel experience, all service-providers are required to provide coaches rather than buses, and all children and young people will have individual seats.
- The Comhairle takes full account of weather conditions in planning transport arrangements and ensuring pupil safety travelling to school. Journeys to school will be cancelled if the weather conditions are judged to be prohibitive to ensuring safety. There are effective communication systems in place through local radio and messaging services, which ensure that parents are timeously informed of any proposed school closure. It is not considered that the number of school days lost due to severe weather conditions has had or will have an adverse effect of children's education.

**ISSUE:** The Council requires to outline as soon as possible how it will continue to inform and engage with all stakeholders.

**RESPONSE:**

- The Comhairle will establish a Reference Group and a Disruption Management Group on the basis as the previous six new schools.

- The Comhairle's practice in the development, design, construction and commissioning of the six new schools included: consultation and communication with the respective Parents' Councils throughout the delivery process from inception to commissioning; the establishment of Reference Groups including parents, pupils and staff and other relevant stakeholders to consider issues associated with the design and specification of the schools; and, where construction works were adjacent to and affected the operation of existing schools, the establishment of Disruption Management Groups involving representatives from the Contractor, the education authority and school management.
- The purpose of these stakeholder groups is to ensure that, at all times, communication are effective, that anxieties are addressed timeously, that pupils are engaged as part of their curriculum throughout the process, and that the health, safety and welfare of all those involved in the project is safeguarded as much as possible.

## SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION WITH PUPILS

- 8.1 Dependent on the size of the school, consultation with pupils was carried out on the basis of a representative focus group and a cross section of stages or whole school. In each school the children and young people were asked the following questions:
1. We are thinking about building a new school for pupils who are currently attending Paible, Lochmaddy and Carinish schools. This would mean closing your school and opening a new school. What do you think about that idea?
  2. What do you think would be the good things about having a new school?
  3. The new school will be open, we hope, in August 2015. That is in two years time. Do you have any concerns about moving to a new school?
  4. Have you any other thoughts regarding the new school that you would like to share with us?

### Summary of Consultation with School pupils

#### Question 1

The majority of pupils thought this would be good and really fun. One pupil raised concerns about getting lost in a larger school. They really enjoyed the recent 'Getting Together' days and thought this would be good, that it would be nice being all together and making new friends. Some had cousins in other schools. Some senior pupils thought they would get a better education in a new larger school, but others like the way it is just now.

Some pupils asked about what would happen with their existing building. Some pupils said the new school would be a bit too far from their house, and another was not sure about all of the schools coming together.

Whilst most pupils like the idea of a new school, a number of pupils at Carinish and Lochmaddy would be sad to see their school close. Some Paible pupils would prefer that their building was used by the community rather than being demolished.

#### Question 2

All pupils highlighted the fact that there would be more people to play with. This meant bigger football teams and classes with people their own age. Pupils pointed out that they would be able to see their friends and relatives who go to other schools every day. All were looking forward to doing activities with people the same age. Some senior pupils particularly thought that not having to do activities with P1 and 2 would be good. All thought it would be good to meet new friends.

All thought that newer equipment in classrooms and bigger teams for playing outside were important. Some senior pupils thought that having everyone in a new school would result in a better education.

**Question 3**

Most were not worried about anything though some suggested that they could be supplied with a timetable so they know where to go and when. Pupils said that some people won't know their way around and could get into trouble. The larger number could frighten some of the younger ones, and they could get bullied because there are larger numbers.

Lochmaddy pupils said they would miss their school, but thought that it would be ok. Some thought it might be a little scary at the beginning, but the 'getting together days' had been good. One pupil said that they didn't want to move and that they didn't like big schools, though most had no concerns.

**Question 4**

Pupils asked for more footballs and some more bikes. Swings and bars, and a bigger playground were also popular. They also suggested an astro turf pitch, gardens, poly tunnel, green house, outside shelter, summer house with a turf roof, and a swimming pool.

Some said that Paible would be too far for Lochmaddy children to get there, and that the school should be right middle of the island. Some expressed concerns over noise because of the number of people and another pupil wanted to know when the school would open and close.

**RESPONSE:**

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

**Areas where we might help**

Providing opportunities for the pupils in the three schools to come together has clearly had a positive impact. The schools will be supported in the forthcoming session to explore further opportunities for this kind of activity.

Providing pupils with a map and timetable prior to their move to the new school will help with concerns regarding size etc.

Engaging pupils in a focus/reference group as the design of the new school progresses will also give them an opportunity to shape the school.

**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.

Staff were concerned about what was going to happen to them when the new school opens. Would they be transferred and still have a job?

Staff were enthusiastic about having a new school. Current schools are too small. A new school would offer a better learning experience for pupils with improved IT facilities. Some staff indicated a preference for a neutral site, though others were concerned that opposition in the community might delay or jeopardise the building of the new school. All commented that seeing the pupils in the get together days shows that the pupils are very positive about this.

Staff thought that nursery provision should be in the same building and under the management of a Head Teacher though there was concern over the impact on existing nursery providers in North Uist.

Some thought that the cleaning and maintenance of building should be retained directly within the Comhairle.

Some staff would prefer dedicated school buses.

**RESPONSE:**

- It is proposed that the cleaning and maintenance of the new North Uist School will be retained by the Comhairle.
- There will be a reduction in the requirement for some staff. However, current workforce planning, inclusive of VER, opportunities for redeployment, retraining, short-term contracts and discussions with unions are in place to ensure that we can, where possible, operate within a no-redundancy situation.
- The Comhairle has committed to looking at solutions, in the context of the tendering specification of new bus service contracts from April 2015, which would reduce travelling time for pupils from the more distant areas by using minibuses and/or taxis to take pupils to identified pick-up points so that travel to and from school would be as direct as possible.
- The Western Isles, in the interests of efficiency and services for the public, supports an integrated transport arrangement. This has operated for a period of approximately 14 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. This service was reviewed in 1999 and was the subject of a Best Value Review in 2008.
- 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.
- In order to ensure a better travel experience, all service-providers are required to provide coaches rather than buses, and all children and young people will have individual seats.

**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. The factors to be considered in terms of Section 12 were addressed in some detail in the Proposal Document. Other than travelling arrangements, which are addressed earlier in this report, the Comhairle’s position on these matters was not challenged during the consultation period.
- 10.2 In recognition of the impact of school closures on local communities, the Comhairle undertook, in addition to statutory consultation, community conversations 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’.
- 10.3 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.
- 10.4 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)
- 10.5 HMI visited Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible Schools to speak to parents, pupils and staff. They did not attend the public meeting but had the opportunity to review in detail the proposal document and all written responses.

10.6 In summary, the HMI Report recognises the merits of the closure proposal.

*“The proposal from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to close Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible Primary Schools on 26 June 2015 and to establish a new North Uist Primary School on the existing school site at Paible from 13 August 2015 will bring educational benefit for the children of North Uist. They should have significantly enhanced learning experiences in a modern and well-resourced building. They would all have access to Gaelic Medium Education and increased interaction with others of the same age and stage. They may have access to a wider range of extra-curricular opportunities, although participation may be restricted by travel arrangements. Staff would benefit from more opportunities to work and plan together. The council would be able to make more efficient and effective use of its resources to the benefit of all learners throughout its area.”*

*“The new school would provide an environment for learning where children would have increased opportunities to interact and learn alongside others of the same age and stage. A larger pupil population will create greater flexibility in grouping children for learning and teaching and enable them to move on to secondary school with others at the same stage.”*

- 10.7 The Director of Education and Children’s Services, on reviewing all of the submissions, 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 Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible Primary Schools would be provided at a new North Uist School and that the education provision should be discontinued at Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible Primary Schools from 26 June 2015.
- 10.8 The Director of Education and Children’s Services recommends that a transfer of pupils from Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible Schools to a new North Uist School 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.
- 10.9 Pupils and parents of Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible Schools 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.
- 10.10 The proposal will result in pupils at Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible Schools attending a building that is modern and better designed for the delivery of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century curriculum.
- 10.11 The closure of Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible Schools will both improve efficiency of the school estate and enable investment in education and provide a better educational experience for pupils.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 11.1 It is recommended that:
- a) the education provision at Carinish School be discontinued with effect from 26 June 2015 or such later date as the Director of Education and Children’s Services shall determine following service availability of the new North Uist Primary School;
  - b) the education provision at Lochmaddy School be discontinued with effect from 26 June 2015 or such later date as the Director of Education and Children’s Services shall determine following service availability of the new North Uist Primary School;

- c) the education provision at Paible School be discontinued with effect from 26 June 2015 or such later date as the Director of Education and Children’s Services shall determine following service availability of the new North Uist Primary School;
- d) a new North Uist Primary School be established on the existing school site at Paible, Isle of North Uist, from 13 August 2015 or such later date as the Director of Education and Children’s Services shall determine following service availability of the new school and the pupils of Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible Schools continue their education there;
- e) the catchment area of the new North Uist Primary School be extended to include the current catchment areas of Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible Primary Schools; and
- f) that the new North Uist Primary School will include provision for statutory pre-school education.