

Present: Cllr Catriona Stewart
 Mr Peter Carpenter
 Mr Robert Emmott
 Mr Calum Mackenzie
 Mr Allan Smithyman
 Mr Dan Macphail
 Mrs Patricia White
 Ms Lesley McDonald
 Cllr Archie Campbell
 Cllr Neil Beaton
 27 parents and members of the public

Apologies: Cllr Uisdean Robertson

SCHOOL CONSULTATION – LOCHMADDY -29 OCTOBER AT 7.30PM

Mrs Catriona Stewart: My name is Catriona Stewart, I am Chair of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Education and Children's Services Committee and I will be Chair at this evening's meeting. With me this evening are Mr Peter Carpenter, Director of Education and Children's Services, Ms Lesley McDonald, Head of Executive Office, Mr Robert Emmott, Director of Finance and Corporate Services, Mr Allan Smithyman, Learning Community Principal for this area, Mr Calum Mackenzie, Head of Asset Management, Mrs Patricia White, Head of Early Years Education and Mr Dan Macphail, who is charged with project delivery on behalf of the Comhairle.

This evening's meeting is being recorded, therefore could you please ensure that your mobile phones are switched off, not on silent or on meeting, but actually switched off for the duration of the meeting as we really do not want any interference which may distort the recording of the meeting in any way.

In August 2007 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar decided to undertake a review of educational provision throughout the Western Isles. Since that time a number of formal consultations and informal conversations have been held in various communities which has resulted in the closure of some schools and the amalgamation of a number of other schools. This evening's meeting is part of the formal consultation process in respect of the discontinuation of primary education at Lochmaddy School as required by the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010. It is proposed that 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; 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. The aim of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is to provide our children with the best educational experiences and outcomes in modern learning environments suitable for the 21st century requirements within resources available. The Comhairle continues to face serious challenges. School rolls have practically halved in 30 years as education is resourced centrally according to pupil numbers. Funding has therefore decreased significantly. We face ever tightening financial constraints. Some who are present here will have attended various budget consultation meetings and will have been made aware of just how significant the savings we are required to make. Our capital programme leading up to 2018 is half the value of the previous programme, some £42 million. The Comhairle have allocated £6.5 million of that £42 million to build a new school in North Uist along with

monies from Scottish Government in the region of £1.5 million. There are significant pressures on other Comhairle services such as Community Care, Roads and Infrastructure, Waste Services to name but a few. We have built 6 new schools across our islands and I hope that many of you have had an opportunity to visit our new school in Balivanich. On completion of the new Primary School in North Uist, over 50% of our pupils will be educated in new, efficient learning environments in which Curriculum for Excellence is delivered. Quality education being delivered in quality buildings. Our aim, in line with Scottish Government's Estate Strategy is for all our pupils to be educated in new or refurbished buildings by 2018. I am now going to ask Ms McDonald, Head of our Executive Office to go over procedure; I will then ask Mr Carpenter to speak to the proposal document following which I will open the meeting to questions from the floor. Thank you.

Ms Lesley McDonald: Thank you Chair. As you indicated this process is taking place in terms of the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act of 2010. The proposal document was issued on Thursday 26 September of this year, shortly after that it came to light that there were some inaccuracies in that document and those inaccuracies were corrected by notice to everyone who had received the document. By law we are required to go out to consult for a period of at least 30 school days, the period in this case is 32 days, because we do not count the October Holidays which took place in the middle of the period. The deadline for you making representations is therefore 5pm on 22 November this year and the specific schools consultation e-mail address is provided in the proposal document. I can also give that address to anyone similarly you can submit a representation by writing to the Chief Executive at the Comhairle, Mr Malcolm Burr.

The process that is followed...this public meeting forms a very important part of the process and this meeting is being recorded and a verbatim record of this meeting, together with any representations we receive will be made available firstly to HMIE and subsequently to elected members and Scottish Ministers as part of the consultation report. I would therefore ask that when you are asking questions, you let us know who you are, because then it is easier for you to find yourselves in the transcript of the meeting.

Following the 22 November we send those representations or (there is a statutory provision for us to send a summary but we have never done that, we send everything we get), together with the note of this meeting to HMIE. HMIE may then come out to the school to speak to people in any event; they will give us a report back by 18 December of this year. Following that, the Comhairle has to prepare a consultation report looking at the proposal document, the note of this meeting, any representations it has received and any comments made by HMIE. That consultation document will be made available to everyone who has made a representation. We will let you know it has been published and provide you with the web-link to it or a paper copy if you prefer and that will be published at least three weeks before the Comhairle makes a decision.

The consultation report will go to the Education and Children's Services Committee on 4 February 2014 which will make a recommendation to the Comhairle meeting the following Thursday on 13 February 2014. The Comhairle then has 6 working days to provide all of the information: the consultation report which includes all of the things I have just mentioned, such as the note of the meeting, the representations, the HMIE Report and crucially how the Comhairle has responded to each of those things. Scottish Ministers then have 6 weeks to determine whether or not they are going to call-in. They would call-in if they felt that the Comhairle had gone wrong somewhere in the process or had failed to adequately take into account the factors that the law says we must take into account and to respond to representations made. During the first three weeks of that period, the Government will take account of any written submissions that are made to them so for the sake of argument, if we send the document on 19 February, then there will be three weeks from that date where people can make further written representations which the Government may look at in determining

whether or not to call-in the application. It is a very definite statutory procedure up to that date of call-in but the law doesn't then say once an application has been called-in how long Scottish Ministers have. They could technically take really as long as they liked but I would have to say that the experience of the Comhairle has been that Ministers do deal with these applications pretty promptly, so they have dealt with them pretty quickly for us in the past. Once they have been called-in they have dealt with them pretty quickly and they have complied with the time limit for call-in as well. I am happy to take any questions as to the process. Chair.

Mrs Catriona Stewart: Thank you Ms McDonald. Mr Carpenter, if you could now speak to the Report for a short time please.

Mr Peter Carpenter: Thank you Chair. In January 2013 the Comhairle led a Community Conversation regarding the future education provision in North Uist. At the meetings which were attended by parents, Members and community representatives they voiced strong approval for the creation of a new school in North Uist. In September 2013, further community conversations were held and at this stage the focus of the discussions was in the community's views regarding the proposed site of the new school and the arrangements for 0-3 and 3-5 education. Following those meetings and subsequent various technical reports, the proposal document was prepared.

I don't propose to speak at length regarding the advantages of a new school building or new facilities for primary aged pupils. I know that many in the audience today will have had the opportunity to visit Daliburgh or Balivanich Schools. But, by providing such facilities we believe that the Comhairle will benefit from better value for money for education provision for our children. New facilities that are advantageous for a number of reasons and these include an enhanced learning environment for our pupils, better facilities including outdoor sport playing, ICT, library, canteen and other facilities. A larger school roll will offer social and educational benefits to our pupils. More staff will provide greater flexibility in the deployment of staff to meet the learning needs of our pupils. The school will also offer Gaelic Medium education which is currently not available at Lochmaddy School. The new school will have four classes from primary 1-7. Two gaelic medium and two english. There will be two pre-school classes for children aged 3-5, one gaelic medium and the other english medium offering a capacity of up to 100 pupils plus two early years classes.

The design of the current stage of the proposal has included capacity for 0-3 provision. This was incorporated because parents and community representatives expressed a strong view at the community conversation and subsequently that the Comhairle should plan a new school that provided one stop single site educational provision. Parents stated not only that this would be convenient and practical reducing travel from one site to another but also ensuring effective transition and continuity of good education experience from nursery to pre-school into primary.

Officers from the Education Department in preparing the proposal document were asked to evaluate the different potential sites from an educational point of view. They required to consider the advantages and disadvantages of the shortlisted sites, considering the following topics in particular: Transport, particularly the travel times, access to community facilities and learning opportunities, the site access for cars and buses and security and children's safety in and around the proposed site.

The Officers found a number of educational benefits in each of the sites and a number of common strengths across each of the shortlisted sites. All had good access to a range of educational opportunities including the natural environment, providing resources for our pupils to learn from the world around them. Most of the sites were or could be made safe for drop off and collection and buses and other access.

Although there were no major or significant differences between the options, Paible was selected as the preferred site from an educational perspective for a number of reasons. Firstly the site is owned by the Comhairle and offering educationally the possibility that the school could be completed earlier than the other sites, not only would this save money but it would therefore have the possibility that more of our pupils and staff could benefit from the accessing the new school at an earlier stage. Secondly the Paible site includes a school field which could be incorporated into the design leading to both grass and man made play sport facilities for the pupils and thirdly it is located the largest population site in North Uist. The proposed site offers an opportunity for some children to walk to school and for pupils to have access to community facilities in the Paible area.

In conclusion from an educational perspective the opportunity of a new school for pupils of North Uist is a positive initial step in our efforts to improve the educational outcomes for the current and future generations of young people. It is an educational provision both sector leading and forward looking offering 21st education facilities for staff as well as pupils. The proposal document has been made available to you. This meeting is about listening to your views and either myself or officers here will be pleased to answer any questions that you may wish to ask. Thank you.

Mrs Catriona Stewart: Thank you Mr Carpenter. I will now open the meeting to questions from the floor and, as Ms McDonald has said earlier, please before you ask your questions if you would be good enough to give your name. Thank you. If you could just wait for the microphone to come to you.

Mr Norman Macleod: I was just wondering, why are we here if you have chosen the site already. It is a proposed site; do we have any input at all? If not, we might as well walk out just now en masse.

Mrs Catriona Stewart: As has already been said...

Mr Norman Macleod: You never mentioned earlier on that it was a council proposed site. You have not consulted us, here in Lochmaddy about it. I sat here with Mr Chisholm and Mr Carpenter and they told us in front of the Minister here (hopefully he is here) that their preferred site was probably around the Clachan area.

Mr Peter Carpenter: This is part of our proposal and yes it is part of a consultation process so this and the other two meetings that will be held tomorrow are part of that process. So we value the views of the community about the sites. The meeting that you refer to, there were discussions about the school site, and at that point no technical work had been done to review the possible sites. I think this is all about ensuring that we make decisions based on informed technical review and educational provision and that is what has been done.

Mr Norman Macleod: Thank you.

Mr Ewan Morrison: Why is Lochmaddy included in this? Carinish and Paible are needing new schools. There is nothing wrong with this school and the kids, everybody, nobody wants Lochmaddy School to shut; there is no need for it to shut. Three years ago you were saying the school had to shut because you had no money, now you are in the school today telling the kids that you have a big pot of money to build a new school. Why is Lochmaddy included in this? In 20 years this will be a ghost town, there will be no reason for any family to want to live here if there is no school. So I would like an answer to that. Why are we included in this?

Mr Ewan Morrison: Can anybody answer that?

Mr Peter Carpenter: I will try and say something about that. I refer to the meetings in January 2013, at that time Members from, representatives from all communities expressed an interest in a new school because it offered better facilities and better educational opportunities.

- Mr Ewan Morrison: What? From Lochmaddy?
- Mrs Catriona Stewart: The meeting was actually open to everybody in the communities of North Uist and I attended that and I chaired that meeting and the consensus of opinion from that night was that the people present there were, the majority of people present at that meeting made clear that they did wish to see a new school which would serve all the pupils of North Uist.
- Mrs Catriona Stewart: If you could just wait for the microphone, because this is being recorded.
- Mr Ewan Morrison: BLANK Site?
- Mrs Catriona Stewart: There was no decision on a site taken, There were views made quite clearly that night but there was no preferred site.
- Mr Ewan Morrison: To me, this is just a sneaky way of what you tried to do three years ago instead of trying to move them all to Carinish, it is just simply shutting schools and building a new one that nobody wants. The Western Isles Council gets more money per head of population than any other county, ok. That is because it is a rural place. You get more money to fund additional schools, so why are you trying to make it like the mainland by having one big school?
- Mrs Catriona Stewart: Are you trying to say to me that you do not want a new school in North Uist?
- Mr Ewan Morrison: In Lochmaddy. If Paible needs a new school, and if Carinish want to join them, then fair enough. Nobody here wants anything to do with any new school. They are happy with their children going here. The kids like going to school on their bikes. You go by Lochmaddy on most days the weather is nice, you will see a big pile of bikes out the front of the school. The kids won't be able to do that. You are going to destroy this village. That is what the Western Isles Council is going to do, is destroy this village and I have said my bit so I am leaving.
- Mrs Catriona Stewart: Thank you.
- Ms Elaine Mackenzie (Parent): We were assured that we would get a new school, a new centralised school, Paible is going to be redecorated and made into a new school. We are not going to get a new school. If push comes to shove, and we are given the option right if you want to move to Paible, move to Paible. That is fine, let them go, but we are staying in Lochmaddy. We want a new school, we wanted a new centralised school. It's not going to be that. It is going to be built in (I'm not going to swear) a place where... if you're saying educational Curriculum for Excellence and all that the facilities in Paible and that. What facilities have you got in Paible? The school. There is nothing, the school and Bayhead Shop. No offence to anybody from Paible but Lochmaddy is centralised. You have got all the facilities. You have got the bank, Taigh Chearsabhaigh, you've got the surgery, you've got everything. There is a perfect site over there where the hospital used to be. What is the excuse for not using that site? That's my personal opinion.
- Mr Peter Carpenter: I think the Director made it clear that a number of sites had been identified and looked at and from the technical aspects. The site that was chosen as the preferred site was the school at Paible for a number of reasons.
- Ms Pamela Macaskill (Parent): I think the general consensus looking at the broad picture that the site at Paible was really just selected due to monetary factors and not really looking at the wider benefits as a whole. Just as Elaine mentioned, looking at Curriculum for Excellence facilities for pupils, there just seems to be. Just looking at various documents today there seems to be a lot of emphasis on the fact that there was a football pitch at Paible. I think we just think that the reason that Paible was planned all along was due to monetary factors and the

fact that the Council already owned the site there. In terms of what is around about Paible and the community as a whole, there is not much there to be honest. Again, no offence to anybody from Paible or from that area but looking at a centralised area with more access to more facilities for the children, hotels, banks, again football pitches. I mean, we would kind of view Paible as, not a ghost town as such but it's, I remember when the Paible secondary was closing, one of the main factors mentioned then was that it was a rural school, it was a bit out there, therefore sending the children to a more centralised school with more facilities there. So now it is.... I don't know, I'm not getting my views across very well, I know what I want to say but its not coming out very well. Does anybody else maybe want to?

Mrs Catriona Stewart:

I can assure you that there were a number of reasons why the Comhairle agreed to put forward Paible as the preferred site having looked on a number of occasions at various technical reports. I think at this stage I'll ask either Mr Mackenzie or perhaps Mr Macphail to come in to give you an idea of the amount of work that was actually done on a number of sites before they came to a decision on that from a technical point of view, that would be the most advantageous place for us to site the new school. Having listened to parents who said, as far as I can recall, clearly in January that there was a wish for a new school to be built to serve the communities of North Uist. There was no decision taken at that meeting on a site, we agreed that we would go and that we would ask officers to identify a number of sites and that was done and they were looked at from a technical point of view. So I will ask the officers at the end of the table, which ever one of them would like to come in first.

Mr Calum Mackenzie:

Ok, I'll start with it and Dan can maybe assist me.

Mrs Catriona Stewart:

Thank you.

Mr Calum Mackenzie:

Well it was a Committee decision for the Director of Technical Services to undertake further work in relation to the identification of a site in the Clachan area and that an options appraisal of development on any such site and on the existing Paible School be presented to the June 2013 meeting of the Committee. Following on from that instruction, the Director of Technical Services looked at a list of sites. There were 12 sites that were looked at. There was two sites actually in Lochmaddy.

Unknown Female:

What was wrong with them?

Mr Calum Mackenzie:

We looked at 12 sites and looked at various factors which would look at the ease of building on these sites. We looked at flood risk, services such as water, waste water, power, telecom, any utilities crossing the site, any archaeological risks, any sites with specific scientific interest, whether the site was big enough, were there any planning restrictions? What the estate comments would be on purchase, any aspects of the roads infrastructure that would affect that development and in general looking at the technical aspects of these. Now, looking at 12 sites there was a scoring methodology put together to actually shortlist these down to sites that we would take further. Of these, you mentioned the Lochmaddy Hospital site, one of the difficulties with that site is that it is in third party ownership just now. There were also issues with overhead power lines, some comments to do with the single track carriageway around the area.

Unknown Female:

But there is single track in Paible....

Mr Calum Mackenzie:

Yes agreed, but there is other aspects.

Unknown Female:

And there is flood risk...

Mr Calum Mackenzie: There is no flood risk.

Unknown Male: There is.....BLANK

Unknown Female: It was flooded last year at the school gates..... and the car park.

Mrs Catriona Stewart: If you could just wait for Mr Mackenzie to finish and then I will ask you to comment using the mike and giving your name. It is very important that we do get this absolutely right.

Mr Calum Mackenzie: Neither of these sites are noted as having a flood risk on the SEPA register. That was one of the things we looked at. Following on from that, they were shortlisted down to three sites. One was at Clachan, one near Carinish at Claddach Kirkibost and the other in Paible. Now there were other factors there that knocked some of these off the list such as land ownership and the availability to actually purchase that land in time. So from that list of 12 they were taken down to a shortlist of 3 and these were the 3 sites that then went to much more detailed technical investigation. Now the results of that technical investigation are in that Report showing Paible as being the preferred site. One of the main reasons for that technically is the provision of services. The cost of taking services to sites in Clachan they were prohibitive compared to the Paible site which already has all these services in place. So, technically, that was the major deciding factor. I am happy to take any further questions.

Mr Shaun Mackenzie (Parent): Yes cost is massive, we understand that, and you have a tight budget. We totally understand. You got one chance to get this right, do it right. That is what we are asking today Review the sites. We are unfavourable, we do not agree with the Paible site. That is what the parents are telling you tonight. We would prefer you review it and get it right first time. (APPLAUSE) You will not get a second chance to build this school. Do it right please. Think about what you are doing. You have got a good opportunity, do it right.

Ms Rachel Campbell (Parent): You have alluded to the fact that in the meeting in January that you had a unanimous backing from the parents for the new school. That unanimous decision was based on the fact that we were being offered a new school on a new site. Had you not offered a new school on a new site, you would not have received a unanimous backing. (APPLAUSE). If you had been honest from the beginning and said that the only real conceivable option was being to be Paible based on the factors that you have just stated, then the parents, I am pretty sure, would have elected to keep their schools and I think that is probably the position that the schools are in today. Both Carinish and Lochmaddy would rather opt to keep their schools as they are just now, rather than go to a site at Paible. (APPLAUSE).

Mr Catriona Stewart: Well I think as you have heard from a number of officers here, no decision was made on a site at that meeting. There was a consensus for a new school which then gave the opportunity for officers to go and identify sites and as you have heard, 12 sites were identified and then it was a matter of looking at what was technically possible and feasible at the time. That is the reason at the end of the day that the Comhairle came to a decision that the preferred site for the new school would be at Paible.

Ms Rachel Campbell ? You mentioned about flood. Would there be no flood risk on the SEPA Register, well you have to go with the evidence of your eyes and the evidence is there that last year there was flooding up to the school playground. So regardless of what any register says, we know that that is on a flood risk site. Why not build on somewhere where there is no flood risk and do away with the risk factor.

Mr Calum Mackenzie: We have looked at the flood risk there and, yes there may have been localised flooding in that area up to the car park, however the school site was not at risk. Now, the frequency of that happening is not annually or every ten years. The flood risk plans from SEPA have been modelled on a 1 in 200 years flood risk. Now that is the information that we have together with the local information of course, where the flooding extended to but there is no site.... the other 2 sites that we looked at were roughly the same. There is also a flood risk adjacent to the Clachan site but they are generally on the road side. Looking at the particular sites of the schools, there is no risk of the site of the school getting flooded and we perceive the flood risk, if it is going to be on the access roads of not being something that would be significant that would cause closure of schools on a frequent basis.

Ms Rachel Campbell ? Your mentioning the flood risk at Clachan there, on the bend, but that would also affect the attendance of Paible School.

Mr Calum Mackenzie: Agreed, but that is on a 1 in 200 years flood frequency.

Ms Rachel Campbell ? Well I beg to differ, because last year was 2012 and in 2005 we had a pretty significant flood risk. So that is 2 in 8 years. Not 1 in 200.

Mr Calum Mackenzie: But the level of disruption there would have been potentially for one day, so you are talking over these years, 2 days over 6 or 7 years. We would not take that as a significant flood risk.

Ms Rachel Campbell ? Well the 2005 occasion resulted in the loss of life of a whole family which I don't in any way shape or form consider not significant.

Mr Calum Mackenzie: That is not what I was relating to.

Mrs Catriona Stewart: Nobody here does.

Mr Calum Mackenzie: That is not what I was relating to and I will be quite specific about that. This whole community including Lewis were affected by that and personally I knew people down here affected by that. So, I think it is a very unfair way to put that.

Ms Rachel Campbell ? But to be fair, it is our children. It is our children that will be potentially put at risk. That is why we are so concerned about it.

Mr Calum Mackenzie: The risk of flood is really a material thing on the way to the school. What you are talking about are severe weather events where you would take in emergency planning and forecasting, as they did in England this week. So you prepare yourself for that. It doesn't just hit us. 2005 was also predicted. It was a horrible incident and I would be imagining that if we were to foresee that as a Council, that we would have wholesale closure of schools. You would not have children travelling in that kind of weather condition. We are talking specifically about the risk of flood to material building here. That is what I say is insignificant. Not the risk of life.

Mr Norman Macleod: Could I ask you what your flood plan is?

Mr Calum Mackenzie: What the flood plan is? There have been flood plans put together which identify areas which are at various risks. There are 2 spots within that route up to Paible from Clachan that have been identified as a fairly high risk of flooding. Localised to the road area.

Mr Norman Macleod: I phoned the Technical Department last week because we had had a problem with flooding outside Taigh Chearsabhaigh. They don't even hold sand bags any more. I thought that might have been one

of the main things that you would hold to stop water getting into a building. It's the way they don't even have a budget for that.

Mr Calum Mackenzie: We can have localised flooding anywhere based on the drainage from the roads, based on the intensity of rainfall. We have to plan engineering wise for the most likely event. There are always going to be cases where we have to react to a flooding incident, but thankfully up here they are not prolonged. They are usually localised and some that can be dealt with when we are aware of them.

Mr Norman Macleod: You must be a lot better at predicting than me because I can't predict what is going to happen in the future.

Mr Calum Mackenzie: You have to look at some means of forecasting. When it comes to what you were talking about, localised flooding, that is generally something that we would react to. So the incident happens and we react to it. There are other cases where if there was a significant risk to the infrastructure, we would plan for it and we would invest in it.

Mrs Catriona Stewart: Thank you Mr Mackenzie.

Ms Elaine Mackenzie: As far as I can recall from the last three meetings that we all went to, especially the first one, we were never asked about nursery provision. Why are you changing something that is working but the Claddach Kirkibost, you know the Saoghal Beag Nursery? I presume that when you open the new school and you'll have the pre-school nursery and all that in. Is Saoghal Beag going to close or are you going to keep both places open? Because I don't see there is anything wrong with the Saoghal Beag Nursery. Two of our children have been there, so are you going to close that facility to put pre-school education into the new school?

Mr Peter Carpenter: The proposal at the moment is that there would be 0-11. Yes, that is the proposal. In the most recent conversation, meetings there were discussions about the opportunities of different ways of providing 0-3 or 3-5. Now, from an educational point of view my argument is, I think I said before, was I think the strong advantages of having 0-11 in a single site, and that was expressed to us by parents and community members. There is also educational value in ensuring continuity of experience under the leadership, of a Head Teacher of a school and the Curriculum for Excellences requirement to plan from the earliest age and provide educational opportunities which are consistent with that Curriculum. However, I would say that there is an opportunity for us, as you have hinted earlier, for us to work together as a community to find the best way, with the resources we have which are limited, as that gentleman suggested were very limited to provide at least as good a provision as we are now in this area into the future. It is a long term provision. It is very important that we don't just look at what is here now, good as it may be, that we ensure a good provision is continued in to the future, and that is what this proposal is about.

Ms Elaine Mackenzie ? So, when you put this new nursery in the new school, it will obviously be open 365 days and 8am in the morning to 5pm in the evening like the nursery is at the moment for parents who don't work in schools, who don't get seven weeks school holidays and who don't finish at 3pm in the afternoon. Will there be nursery provision for them?

Mr Peter Carpenter: My ambition is to provide the same service, if not better, than is currently in place.

Mr Sean Mackenzie: Can you list to us why you should build this school at Paible apart from the cost? Assure us why you want to build this apart from cost. I am not seeing any of you jumping up here and saying that we build

it for this. I know it is a cost saving. Can you give us another good reason. We are looking at transportation and we are looking at other stuff, we are looking at the all round school as a whole and Paible hasn't impressed over the years. It has been one of the lower grade schools, it's out of the way. You can look all you like, Lochmaddy is a higher graded school and we are going to send our children to a lower graded school. It won't be a new school. I don't mean that, but I am saying give us why you should build this school at Paible? So that you can give us confidence that we are going to send our kids there in the future.

Mr Peter Carpenter: If I try and answer that. Could you just explain to me what you mean by Paible being a 'lower graded school' because I don't understand what you mean.

Mr Sean Mackenzie: Well Lochmaddy is a B Grade. What grade, can one of you tell me what grade Paible is at the moment?

Mr Peter Carpenter: You are talking about the condition of the building then?

Mr Sean Mackenzie: I don't mean. Everything everything, the whole school.

Mr Peter Carpenter: We grade buildings according to the quality of the....

Unknown Female: Sorry, at the first meeting we were told when they were going to close the schools, when all the gossip was going about that the school was being closed. We don't have gaelic medium here, so Carinish couldn't come here, they couldn't close Carinish because they couldn't put Carinish kids to Paible because Paible was a lower grade school to Carinish. Carinish and Lochmaddy were the same grade at that time.

Mr Peter Carpenter: I think you mean the condition of the building. Sorry, I misunderstood what you were suggesting there. Yes, my understanding but the technical guys will advise better but yes the buildings are rated A,B and C. The new build will be A. It will be a better building which you would expect with that degree of investment. It will be a better building that will provide educational facilities for the 21st century..... Money and I think you are right to identify that but that is about, as I understand it if we have the opportunity once in a lifetime to provide a better educational building then, we have got to do the best we can with the money available to us. So we choose the site that is best value, that offers the economic opportunities for us to invest in the building itself. It is wise to do that and I think, if you want any further detail about the technical specifications between the three A, B and C type buildings, there is no building here that is C that we are talking about. They are B but the new school will be A.

Unknown Female: I think we all know that the new school will be an A, a brand new school but what Sean was saying, money aspects aside, location wise, what in your opinions is the benefit of the school being based in Paible which is not a central location, there is no amenities around about the area for children to go and explore. There is nothing like that there. So just money aside, what would the main benefits of the school being at Paible be in your eyes?

Mrs Catriona Stewart: I think at the end of the day, we all have to work within the budget that we have and as I said originally, significant sums of money have been allocated by the Comhairle out of their Capital Programme to ensure that the new school will have superb out door facilities that are not available in North Uist at the moment along with the grass pitch that is there and I would think that it would be very foolish of me to remark about the land around any part of Uist because it is picturesque. It is full of all sorts of wildlife that children

would go out wherever the school was situated and take advantage of the natural environment, that again is part of the Curriculum.

Mr Calum Mackenzie: Can I add to that, that technically there are educational benefits of Paible. The technical benefits are that the site is in Comhairle ownership at the moment, so there is a good chance that land acquisition would not hold up delivery. The site is big enough to take all the facilities that we have talked about including retaining the grass pitch as well. As alluded to earlier on as well, one of the main considerations are the provision of services, not least waste water services. If we were to go to a new site, then it is not easy to fit in new treatment facilities and getting to a point of discharge without spending a lot of the money doing that. You already have these services at Paible so I hope I have answered technically what the main reasons are and you have heard earlier on as well what the educational benefits are as well.

Ms Rachel Campbell: Were there actual projections done for the building costs of say on the Clachan site as opposed to the Paible site, or was that not done?

Mr Calum Mackenzie: Yes there were cost projections done for the three sites.

Ms Rachel Campbell: Ok, and were there significant differences between the build costs on each of the sites because I have been informed that there was a cost associated with the sites other than Paible for like £200,000 for changing rooms or something.

Mr Calum Mackenzie: Right, basically the construction costs for the super structure aren't that different at either of the three sites. There are differences though when you come to foundation conditions and as I said before service provision. That is one of the major costs. What you are talking about the demolition costs and yes we factored in the demolition costs at Paible School because that would be over and above building on a green field site. We also factored in the provision of new changing facilities at Paible to retain the grass pitch there if we were going to another site. So we have thought of all these aspects and the benefits of having the building on the green field sites and on the current Paible site and technically that is the way that the figures come out. The build costs for the construction as I said, not a lot of difference, the big difference comes in the servicing of these sites. I hope that has answered your question.

Mrs Catriona Stewart: Thank you very much.

Unknown Female: Can I just ask something?

Mrs Catriona Stewart: Certainly.

Ms Ada Campbell: My name is Ada Campbell, I am representing Saoghal Beag Nursery and Urachadh Uibhist. I realise tonight is a statutory consultation meeting to discuss the statutory elements of the Comhairle's proposals. On reading the document, all I can see in reference to pre-school provision is the 3-5 years is mentioned in the statutory document. I hope that we are able to hear from Peter Carpenter's comments tonight that in fact it may be time to move to discussing the non-statutory elements that the Comhairle is planning and just to repeat that we would be happy to enter into discussions to find a way forward to protect the existing services that we have been delivering for 12 years for the community. It would be a shame if the all year round, all day facilities are available for babies from 6 months and upwards, I noticed you referred to 0-3 but infact in the nursery in Balivanich the babies are not allowed in until 1 year but anyway hopefully it would be from 6 months and upwards and as I say we hope to be involved in some future

discussions so that the level of services to the community can be protected. The Scottish Government is bringing out new legislation, Community Empowerment bills and the Children and Young Peoples Bill, whereby they are trying to encourage Local Authorities to be more flexible in how they provide childcare in pre-school education. We understand the limitations on the Comhairle due to the geography and the very isolated villages that we have here and how difficult it is to provide proper full service. But we think we are delivering that in a Best Value way and we believe that we can contribute to that in the future.

Mrs Catriona Stewart: Thank you, we have noted your comment. Thank you very much Mrs Campbell.

Unknown Male: Before we draw to a close here, could we have a show of hands who would like a central school around the Clachan area? Could you count them please?

Ms Lesley McDonald: I make it 13, actually I don't think I caught that lady there. 14.

Unknown Male: Ok thanks.

Mrs Catriona Stewart: Thank you very much. The Comhairle will review the proposal having regard to the HMIE Report, written representations and oral representations made at the public meetings that we are having over the next 2 days. A consultation report will then be prepared which will be published in electronic and printed formats and its availability will be published in local newspapers. The Report will be available on the Comhairle website and from Comhairle Offices as well as the affected schools free of charge. This consultation report together with any other relevant documentation will be considered by the Education and Children's Services Committee on 4 February 2014 for their recommendation. The Committee's recommendation will then be submitted to the approval of the Comhairle on 13 February 2014. Should the Comhairle decide to close any of the schools at this stage, it is required to notify Scottish Ministers of that decision and provide them with a copy of the proposal document and consultation report in accordance with the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act of 2010 within 6 working days of the decision being made. Scottish Ministers have a 6 week period from the date of that final decision to decide if they will call-in the proposal. If the Scottish Ministers call-in the proposal, they may refuse to consent to the proposal or grant their consent to the proposal subject to conditions or unconditionally. Within the first three weeks of the six week period the Scottish Ministers will take account of any relevant representations made to them by any person. Until the outcome of the six week call-in process has been notified to the Comhairle, the Comhairle will not proceed to implement the proposal, The last date from the receipt of written submissions is 5pm on Friday 22 November 2013 and as Ms McDonald said earlier, all submissions should be forwarded to Mr Malcolm Burr, Chief Executive of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Sandwich Road, Stornoway or electronically to schoolsconsultation@cne-siar.gov.uk, that address is in the proposal document at 3.5 for anybody who does not have a copy. Thank you very much for your attendance at this evenings meeting, Moran Taing agus Oidche Mhath leibh Uile. Thank you.