

## NOTE OF PUBLIC MEETING IN LIONEL SCHOOL – TUESDAY 15 JUNE 2010

Morag Munro

(Welcome in Gaelic First). Good evening and welcome to this formal consultation meeting. Before we start as is our custom I would like to ask Mr Iain Gilles to open with prayer. Thank you. My name is Morag Munro, I am the Chair of Education and Childrens' Services at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and I would like to introduce to you the other people who are with me tonight around this table. At the end of the table there is Derek Mackay who will be clerking this meeting tonight, he is the Democratic Services Manager with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, beside him is Bernard Chisholm, who is the Head of Resources and Schools with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, beside me is Joan Mackinnon who is the Director of Education. On my left is Mr Robert Emmott who is the Director of Finance and Corporate Services and beside him is Mr Malcolm Burr who is the Chief Executive of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. Your own Councillors of course are here and they need no introduction. I would also would like to welcome Mr Brown, I'm not sure where he is but he is here somewhere from Her Majesty's Inspectorate, we are very pleased to have Mr Brown with us this evening. In August 2007 the Comhairle decided to undertake a review of educational provision throughout the Western Isles. Since that time a number of informal conversations have been held with Communities. As a result the Comhairle agreed to go to statutory consultation on the proposed discontinuation of the S1/S2 Stage of Education here at Lionel. This meeting is part of the formal consultation process for the discontinuation of S1/S2 Stage of education in Lionel School. The purpose of this evening's meeting is to give you an opportunity to hear more about the proposal to ask questions and to give your views. It is Comhairle nan Eilean Siar as a whole who are consulting here tonight, not just those of us who are around this table and that includes of course your own local councillors. We are all here to listen tonight not to make decisions. The aim of the authority is to provide our children with the best educational experiences and outcomes in modern learning environments suitable for 21<sup>st</sup> century needs within the resources that are available to us. I don't think anybody is unaware of the fact that the Comhairle along with all other local authorities in Scotland and all other public bodies are facing serious challenges in the years ahead, but we have our own special challenges in the Western Isles. Our school rolls have fallen to 3,681 from 6,246 in 30 years and in last 5 years alone our school roll has fallen by 333. Because our education is resourced according to pupil numbers our funding has comparatively decreased. We have 38 buildings, 18 of which are in a poor condition. We are facing general tightening financial constraints, there are pressure on other council services and budgets, such as community care, roads and transport, waste services and so on and there's also the implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence from August this year. We are in the process of building 6 new schools and that will means that 44% of our pupils will be educated in new efficient learning environments in which to deliver the new curriculum. Our aim in line with Scottish Government Schools Estate Strategy is for all our pupils to be educated in new or refurbished buildings by 2018. In order to achieve this though we have to reduce the spare capacity in our school estate. I will now pass over to Derek Mackay who will go over the procedure for this process.

Derek Mackay

Everyone should have received a copy of the Proposal Document, but There are plenty of copies available tonight if anyone requires a copy.

**(Morag Munro comes in to ask if anyone requires a copy and**

**reminds everyone to switch off their mobile phones and remind everyone that meeting is being recorded and mobile phones actually interfere with the recording even if on silent)**

By now everyone should have received a copy of the Proposal Document, but we have some copies available tonight so let me know if you require a copy. I would refer everyone to the Sections 2 and 3 of this Proposal Document which are found on pages 3, 4 & 5 and these sections outline the procedure which has been followed. I would also refer everyone to page 10 at paragraph 10.1 and just to clarify that the classification of Lionel School in terms of Section 12 of the Schools Consultations (Scotland) 2010 is as a very remote rural school

The Proposal Document was produced following a decision of the Comhairle and has been issued to seek the views of the Community in relation to the proposals for the discontinuation of (S1/S2) provision at Lionel School. This meeting is part of the initial consultation period which is due to end at 5.00pm on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2010.

You can respond to that consultation directly to the Chief Executive, Council Offices in Stornoway in writing and there is also an area on the Council's website which is set out to receive email responses, so you can respond in writing or by email. In relation to the responses when you send in a response either written or by email we will aim to acknowledge that within three working days but if you have not received an acknowledgement within say a week of submitting the response you should contact the Chief Executive's Department directly and we will confirm that we have received your response.

Reference has already been made tonight to a note that is being taken of this meeting. We are going to produce a transcript of the meeting and that is why everything is being recorded. There is a roving microphone and could you please wait until the mic has reached you before you speak so that we can ensure that all questions and comments are recorded. It will be helpful if you could indicate your name before you speak as that will help when we produce the transcript of the Meeting.

My main purpose here tonight is to take a note of the questions and the responses and be a back up to that transcript and particularly to take a note of questions that we are unable to answer tonight. If there are any questions that we are unable to answer I will take a note of these and ensure that a response is issued in due course. You may wish to indicate what is the most route for the response, whether it is directly to you or through the parent Council.

Copies of the transcript will be available for anyone who wishes a copy. It will take us a few days to produce it following tonight's meeting but we can make that available to everyone who requests a copy. It will take us about 5 working days to produce from tonight's meeting but we can make that available to anyone who requests a copy. You can obtain a copy by contacting the Chief Executive's Department, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Sandwick Road, Stornoway.

The procedure to be followed as part of the proposal document is as follows. Once the comments have been received, the proposal documents together with any written representations that are received by the Comhairle will be forwarded to HMIE who will then have until 20<sup>th</sup> August to prepare their own report in relation to the proposals. Officers of the Comhairle then have the opportunity to review the HMIE's report and prepare what is called the Consultation Report.

Up until now what you've been dealing with is the proposal

documents, there will be a further consultation report which will be prepared. This report will be published in electronic and printed formats and will be advertised in local newspapers. It will be available on the Comhairle web-site and from Comhairle Headquarters, as well as at the affected schools, free of charge. Anyone who has made written representations during the consultation period will also be informed about the report. The Consultation Report will be considered by the Education and Children's Services Committee late in October this year going to the full Council in November of this year and it is at that stage that the Comhairle will make its decision on whether or not it is to discontinue S1/S2 provision at Lionel School. From that date Scottish Ministers have six weeks in which to call in the proposal if they have any concerns about any aspects of the proposal. The Comhairle will not move to implement any proposals within that six week period but the estimated date of implementation of any closure is June 2012. In producing, the Consultation report the Comhairle requires to take into account all of the consultation responses together with any comments made by HMIE and that is obviously quite a detailed process. There is also legal requirement that the Comhairle carry out an equalities impact assessment in relation to the proposals and again anything that comes out of this evening will contribute to preparing that assessment.

I am happy to take any questions about the procedure.

Morag Munro

Does anybody have any questions for Mr Mackay on procedure?. If not then I will ask Joan Mackinnon, the Director of Education to go through the proposal document.

Joan Mackinnon

Thank you Chair. Good evening everybody. Can everybody hear me at the back. Yes. Very good. Councillor Munro has outlined the context in which we are here discussing this proposal tonight. We the officers at the Comhairle recognise that we have falling roles, we have more schools than we require for the number of pupils we've got and we have an aspiration to have the optimum number of schools which are in the best condition possible to provide our young people with the best environments in which to learn. This is at a time when we are moving to full implementation of Curriculum for Excellence in August 2010. Now up until now from since the late 80s until this very moment we have been following a programme called the 5 - 14 programme which was introduced in order to give better definition of the Curriculum, to give better reporting to the parents and to have better assessment procedures and while the 5 - 14 Programme has been very good in many ways it is considered timely that we should be looking to renew the Curriculum as from now because from its inception really there have been some problems with S1 and S2 and no matter and I know that you here as parents very much value the educational experience that your children have been having at Lionel. There has been a recognition nationally that S1 and S2 has been problematic. HMI wrote a Report in 2001 on Standards and Quality in Education in Scotland and in that report they say S1 & S2 remains a problem of long standing which HMI have raised consistently in reports over the last 15 years. Schools must ask themselves why it is that many pupils have performed well in P7, mark time or even regress in S1 and S2, At the Nicolson Institute Guidance Staff have been asking their 6<sup>th</sup> year pupils for the past 3 or 4 years about their experiences in school and have been using the results of their surveys to improve provision at the school. Now I know at this school your teachers do that too. They ask pupils and they ask parents and

they ask parents and they use the feedback that they get to improve the provision. When pupils and this is all pupils, pupils from the rural S1 and S2 experience in rural schools as well as those who started S1 at the Nicolson, when they asked pupils about their experience in S1 and S2 they say it was okay but we didn't need two years of it and another prevalent view was that S1 was too much like a repeat of primary 7. The other strong message coming out from pupils is that S5 is far too pressured. Pupils move into S3 and they are currently then starting their standard grade courses. That's what has been happening up until now and they have two years in which to study for their standard grades and they start S5 in August and they basically have 9 months then they are sitting their higher diet and pupils that's its too pressured. We are looking forward to Curriculum for Excellence giving flexibility to schools where the senior phase will be described as the years between S4 and S6 and we are looking to a situation where rather than pupils saying "I'm in 4<sup>th</sup> year or I'm in 5<sup>th</sup> year, or I'm in 6<sup>th</sup> year being able to say I'm doing this course or that course and it's the course that pupils are following and we're hoping that pupils will have more time to prepare for whatever comes in place of highers, we're still not quite clear about that yet. Here are Sgoil Lionail as in all our schools the staff have been engaging with the outcomes and experiences as set out in Curriculum for Excellence and I know that the Head Teacher here has adjusted his timetable to enable pupils to choose from a range of activities and have some different kinds of experiences to what would formally have been S1 course if you like and to a less degree on an S2 here. The school has also developed whole school projects which involve inter disciplinary working. This inter disciplinary working helps children and pupils to make links across learning and therefore making the learning experience deeper. However the fact that the school has to be staffed by a number of itinerant staff creates an inflexibility for the Head Teacher that limits the timetabling options available to them. Recently in the Times Educational Supplement a very experienced Head Teacher who ran a successful school in Kirkintulloch and now works as a consultant was warning school timetables that HMI would be looking for evidence that pupils were making better progress in S1 and S2 and that they were being offered personalisation and choice under Curriculum for Excellence. In his view the best way to do this was to timetable S1 and S3 classes in blocks for all subjects which made it easier to group pupil's viability and to allow them to work in groups at an appropriate level. The challenge when you try to construct a timetable which will allow you to teach in blocks when you share teachers between schools is problematic so if you've got to rely on itinerant staff its very difficult for you to block timetables in that way. So the challenge that's facing the Head Teacher here at Lionel and in our other S1 S2 schools is to provide personalisation on choice within the constraints of itinerant staff and a small number of staff on the whole. So maybe I'd like now just to draw your attention to the proposal document and just to point out that the sections up to 8 really set out the background to the proposal and the aspirations the Comhairle has and really the reasons why we're here tonight. Starting at 9, we have what's called The Educational Benefit Statement and I want really to make it very clear that this benefit statement is written as set out in the Act for us about the Nicolson. I am not and none of us are suggesting that there aren't many educational benefits for pupils in Lionel School. That's not the context which this was written. We weren't writing this as if so say all the benefits lie at the Nicolson but we are expected to point out what we believe the benefits would be for moving to the Nicolson. That is not to say that we are not acknowledging benefits at Lionel. At 9.3. there, we are if you like expanding on what I was saying there in

terms of the choice that the Nicolson has because it has more pupils, more staff. There's more flexibility for timetabling and for offering choice. Moving on to travel at 9.9 we would just like to point out that we recognise that this is a very significant area of concern for parents in this area and while we cannot bring the Nicolson nearer to Lionel and we cannot bring your homes near to Stornoway so the distance is fixed whichever way we look at it what we can do is look at ways of creating the most direct route for pupils from their homes to the school therefore making the journey as short as we can and to point to you at 9.11 really the summary of the educational benefits as we see it and it is about increased opportunities for pupils, greater flexibility in grouping children for learning and teacher. Greater flexibility in the deployment of staff because you have more staff and a larger staff will offer a greater range of expertise and that's just really common sense, that's not to say that staff that are here are not very skilled. There are very skilled staff here but the more staff you have the wider the range of expertise you will have and the other thing that we think is important is that there would be only one transition stage from P7 into secondary. Now while at this moment if you are a pupil who lives in Lionel or if you are the parent of the children who go to Lionel Primary there is only one transition stage for pupils from here into the Nicolson, but if you come from Airidhantuim or from Cross there are two transition stages for pupils. Just again to go onto Section 10 where again under the Act we are asked to consider factors affecting rural school and to emphasise again that Lionel School is actually a very remote rural school as are all our schools because of our distance from a critical population mass of 10,000 people and probably in terms of Lewis and the mainland, probably Inverness would be the nearest that we would be to a population centre that would have 10,000 people. We were asked to consider viable alternatives to closure. We are asked to look at the likely effects on the local community and the different travelling arrangements that may be required and again let me just stress that we do recognise that this is a very important issue for parents here. I think I probably don't want to say anything more just now because tonight is your opportunity to make your views known. This is part of a process which started when we had the conservation here earlier on this year. It isn't that we didn't take account of what you said there, we have but this is just the next step. Everything that you say here tonight will be taken, recorded, written up into a report and your elected members will consider that in October, so it's a long process. I hope you feel that this is part of an opportunity that you have to let us know what you think about this and for us to take account of what you say. Thank you.

Cllr Morag Munro

Thank you Joan. I would now like to open the meeting out to questions or comments from yourselves. We have Donald over here with the Mic. for the purposes of the recording can you make sure that you wait if you want to say something put your hand up and Donald will come to you with the mic and if you would kindly wait until the mic reaches you. If you would also give your name so that when we are writing up the transcript we will know who said what. So if you would wait for the mic and tell us your name please. Can I open it out to questions then or comments.

Mike Cowsill

I have a pupil at this school and at the Nicolson. Just like to ask a question relating to 9.9 in the travel and obviously the distance cannot be changed and its unlikely if timing can really be changed but it's a very big conflict (inaudible) with all the documentation that exists in that you say in 1.1 of your document to secure continuous improvement in education achievement which is absolutely great and

we all want that and in the Curriculum for Excellence it says the children should have full capacities of successful learners with enthusiasm and motivation for learning and a second one of confident individuals with a sense of physical, mental and emotional well-being and also in that document that the Curriculum for Excellence is more than 9 - 4, its out of schools learning. I am trying to compare those things forgive me for a moment as I brought my notes with me on this. We have some documents that have been produced by the Scottish Government one of which states long journeys to school have a negative effect on children's educational performance, long travel times in uncomfortable bus will ....inability to participate in extra curricular activities reduce academic achievement and that was produced by the EPPI in 2001 which I have the document here if you need it for reference later but I can't put the two together and see that a viable option is going to be an hour or more travel of 27 miles if that's the affect of it before the children start and then if S1 and S2 are under performing have to perform even more to get back to where everyone else is who hasn't travelled that distance before their day starts and miss out on evening work because they go home, because they have to get home at a reasonable time, they have to do homework and they have to eat meals at a reasonable time and rest before they go to school again. So I'm just wondering how to reconcile the official reports that say 27 miles or an hour's travel is bad news from an educational point of view in the Curriculum for Excellence when it's the only proposal we've got. I just wondered if someone can give me the reasoning why that is the route that we have taken rather than any other route in terms of school buildings.

Joan Mackinnon

Just to say we do recognise that travel is a problem however we have currently pupils travelling quite a distance to the Nicolson to S1 and S2 and educational attainment in the Nicolson was described at S1 and S2 as good in their last HMI report.

Mike Cowsill

And it is at this school as well and in some aspects you will find that the things that are the benefits of this document are actually already available at this school which I'm sure you know, like smart boards on the wall and so on. What I am trying to do is where the document that falls into all of this which is the Act comes into place it says that you must show for rural schools the benefit and improvement in education to justify the distance of rural travel and there doesn't seem to be that in any outstanding position at the moment in the documents you have produced and I'm just wondering if we are missing something or whether the proposal is going to be in a different way and will show us these other benefits such as how these children are going to take part in extra curricular activity when they are on a bus I don't see how they are going to do it unless the parents are going to be spending £130 per month taking their children in and out of Stornoway in cars and pushing them into bed and dragging them out the next morning, so I just wonder how that's really going to happen in reality rather than in the desired world. The desire is one thing and we would all applaud that, can't be any doubt about that but the achieving of it is something that worries desperately and I'm just wondering if there is anything that can narrow the gap as it were.

Joan Mackinnon

I accept that and I understand that it is a concern for you, however we do believe that it would be better for pupils for be in an S1 to S6 setting and I think that they would maximise the benefit of Curriculum for Excellence if the schools were able to timetable in blocks for S1 - S3 and that would be our aspiration. I mean that the other thing that is basically we cannot ask the Nicolson to hold back its own plans for the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence and they intend to introduce the S3 Course after Easter of 2<sup>nd</sup> year and it would just be

there would be a mismatch if the children from here were joining at the beginning of S3. It would be difficult to blend them in if you like.

Mike Cowsill

One final point on that then, can I just ask why the range of options that the HMI would look for to have been examined in terms of alternatives to building another large Nicolson don't appear except for a two small options which are ruled out in your paper, there doesn't seem to be many other options given that 50 - 60% of the Nicolson school children are Stornoway children and the rest come from the rural areas is to why other schools aren't bigger and Stornoway smaller? I have not really picked on than yet in 4 years as to why that happened and I still don't understand it.

Cllr Morag Munro

Thank you.

Karen Taylor

I have 3 children at this school. Three points again on mental well being and related to the other gentleman. Firstly we have calculated that the children will be spending approximately 100 working days travelling on the bus for those 2 years coming into the Nicolson. How does that benefit their mental and physical well being. We have a government agenda that says firstly we should be looking and the physical and mental well being of our children. I don't see how that does that. Secondly we know that this school has got an absolutely superb record on bullying. There is very very little bullying in this school. The only time my children have had any problem at all in terms of bullying or that kind of thing has been on the school bus. Here they are only on the school bus for 10 mins, what happens when they are on a school bus that is going to be an hour's journey twice a day, every day and there are children who are more vulnerable to bullying and I think that is a long time to be on a bus with other kids who can take that opportunity with no real adult supervision to bully children, again this is a mental wellbeing agenda issue and thirdly there has been lots of research in the last few years showing that adolescence actually go through great hormonal changes and for 13 year olds and that kind of age group it is shown that actually they do not function well in the mornings and there has been proven evidence now that has meant that some schools in England have now started their schools, they are a later time in the morning and are finding that their children at those schools are actually doing far better because they are starting their schools later. What is going happen to our children who instead of having to come into here for 9.15 in the morning which means that they get up about 8, my children get up between 8 - 8.30 in the morning are now going to have to get up at 6.30 in the morning when there is clear evidence that hormonally and physically their bodies are not attuned to getting up at that time in the morning and its not good for them.

Joan Mackinnon

I've read that research myself that show that some research into how the brains of teenagers work and how it seems to be that they are better performing in the afternoon and towards the early evening. However we have yet to decide to change the length of the school day. It would not suit a lot of parents I don't think but (some from audience speaks but inaudible) yes, oh yes and its not something we would close our minds to looking at in the future.

Karen Taylor

(inaudible as no mic) 100 working work days spent for our children travelling on the bus.

Bernard Chisholm

One of the challenges we have in the rural areas is that children are on buses and they are travelling certainly within the Nicolson at the moment children travel considerable distances from S1 - S6. Any public place where there is a large number and from the Butt to Barra will occasionally and sometimes have incidences. Our contracts with

the buses and the companies have a reasonably good record on these things. It is true for us though in the conversations that the issue of travel, the question of the dedicated transport supervision have all come up, now between then and this consultation we have not yet been in the position to fully respond to that but there are areas that we are currently looking at, so the challenge for us at the moment on the times of travel is that currently children are spending up to an hour. We are trying to contain it that and certainly will be reviewing the bus routes. We are certainly looking at the support, some of the issues that have been raised are whether we need to look at some aspects of the integrated transport or the supervision on buses which we are prepared to look at. In terms of the overall wellbeing and mental wellbeing of our young children and of our secondary population, I think both in the school and I notice your own comments were on the buses and on travel but within our schools we do have strong pastoral support systems and we do have strong support systems for young people and I think these are things we are continually working on. However if there are particular incidents, we don't look at these individually with you. I think the outcome of all of that for our young people both in terms of attainment and achievement throughout the Western Isles and one of the things we have said in all these consultations is we are very proud of the attainments and achievements of our young people and the levels might well be that they enjoy leaving school in general.

Mike Cowsill

Just quickly on the bus travel. It's a supplementary question but not supplementary in its content at all. There are a number of children I'm sure at many of the rural schools who have benefited when they have special needs issues from the smaller class size, smaller school in the environment and being able to go to school with their friends or with family in short distances and how they made .....to school. How do you intend to care for them when they now go that much greater distance possibly with the friends that they know, but with a lot of people they don't in a big busy environment on a bus for an hour to school with a 1000 pupils. That's a small group of children thankfully in the world but they are just as important as the other 99% and I just wonder because there is nothing in the document apart from the school time itself where you do mention about obviously the special care teachers and so on but nothing about the travel and I just wonder if you could expand on that.

Bernard Chisholm

I think may parents will know that over recent years within all our schools we have introduced the idea of the additional support need, implemented the legislation and one of the things we worked really hard on in the Western Isles is to look at all the obstacles that might present themselves to young people and we take the view of additional support needs that its not necessary about the vulnerability of the young people although there are numbers of young people that that applies to but it could be about anything that could provide an obstacle to their learning and on that basis we identify a significant number in any one month nearly a 1000 young people of which approximately 400 would have individual plannings around a range of their individual needs. I have to say that both looking at the Nicolson and all our schools we have positive reports usually on the additional support and the pastoral care. I would have to say to you that one of the things that we have done in many cases is made use of all of the schools we have got, sometimes through choice, sometimes through placement in order to support needs. However I would say that additional support needs can be effectively supported in a large school which we do and I think we are also saying on transport that its not an area that we see that this exercise produces cost savings on,

in fact in most cases we recognise that there would be additional transport costs so I think where there would be a level of vulnerability we would look at it but I think in general what I was also saying from the feedback we have got I think the general transport for young people we will probably look at again as well in relation to supervision or integrated versus dedicated.

Gail Vann

Just before we finish on the travel on the school buses, you know following on from what Karen has said there that children that go over to the Nicolson from S1 - S6 will spend 2200 or more hours on the bus and I think that's really important for us to realise just how far it is and just really to reiterate what Mike had said. If you look at the Scottish Government Website the review of research on school travel. It talks about long journeys having a negative impact on educational performance and also it says that participation in non school social activities are lower if there is a long journey time to school. You know I think on that point that I know myself from having a daughter at the Nicolson and friends who have got children at the Nicolson that their ability to be able to participate in extra curricular activities is considerably constrained because of the long journey times. It is just not feasible for children to come home late every day from school. There are times when my daughter comes home from school on the bus arriving home at 8.30, she has left at 7.30, that's a 13 hour day. I think many of the pupils that are at Lionel have the opportunity for extra curricular activities virtually every day of the week. Once you are over at the Nicolson you can't partake in those.

Cllr Morag Munro

Thank you for that

Donnie Macleod

Vice Chair of Parent Council. I'd like to follow on from what Gail has just said and where it says that and its about extra curricular activities and it says that pupils from Lionel School will have access to a much wider range of activities than are available to them at present. What are these activities that they are going to have extra over and above what they have got there. Can you tell me what those activities actually are?

Joan Mackinnon

I can list them, if you want me to. Some of these will be available here I know as well. Badminton, basketball, cheer leading, chess, debating, digital photography, drama, dress making, knitting, drumming, fitness, football, jewellery making, various musical classes, rugby, junior and seniors, shinty, sports club for pupils with additional support needs, journalism and so on. There are more.

Donnie Macleod

Are you saying that we in Ness cannot provide exactly the same activities for them here in this area, because we have got I don't know if you have noticed it, its just there a brand spanking new sports facility which offers all the sports facilities that you have got there and more. You can even go bowling here, can they do that in Stornoway? No they can't. Why are they travelling 27 miles a day, twice a day to do these extra curricular activities when they can do them all here within the community, not just that they can take part in draw classes in Taigh Dhonnchaid, they've got fois if they want to go down that road. They can do the Duke of Edinburgh Award here, they can do it all here. Does it not make more sense if they do these activities here where they can leave school at a reasonable hour, go home, do their homework, get fed and then do their extra curricular actives. Then they have got time to play.

Joan Mackinnon

Well actually we are looking actively at that opportunity where we would still envisage in investing in the local community here where young people may very well access extra curricular activities in their own communities even if they went to school in Stornoway.

- Donnie Macleod How do you propose to do that?
- Bernard Chisholm In a number of these consultations the issue has come up about how if we do take the S1 - S6 how it may affect opportunities for young people in their local community and we have been asked if we would look at that. Two things on it. The Nicolson for the students there do offer that range, but it doesn't mean its to the exclusion of any activities in local communities. Schools are still here, Sports Nis is still here. Taigh Dhonnchaidh, all of these things are still here. The issue for us is as an Education Authority are there ways that we can support the community and work with community learning and developments, sport and health and others to ensure that there is a balance of these things throughout the rural area so from our point of view we are prepared to look at both of these. The reality of some of the choice of these in the Nicolson is just to do with numbers of staff, interest and range of things that can be provided. Nobody is saying that that's to the exclusion of these things in other communities but for us we would be still expected to try and support these and that we are working on. We are currently based on these conversations that we have been having looking at a number of proposals which are in the initial stages of planning and funding applications to try and work in each of the communities. We are looking at amalgamations or changes in provision and we would hope over the next couple of months to be able to come forward with more details on that.
- Unknown Gentleman I can't help noticing but there's a number of things that you are waiting to consult on. You have come over here with half baked plans. Nothing concrete, nothing, your proposing to close our school and you have got nothing to put in its place. In one word, yes or no, can this school give a Curriculum for Excellence, one word yes or no?
- Joan Mackinnon The truth is that, that cannot be answered in one word. It cannot be answered in one word. This school can deliver Curriculum for Excellence to a degree to level 4 but not fully.
- Gail Vann My understanding is that Lionel School can and has been providing the Curriculum for Excellence to a very high level for at least the last two years. Can you explain why only to a degree?
- Joan Mackinnon Yes if you look at the learning experiences and outcomes at level 4 it requires more personalisation and choice and is possible in the 2 year schools. Partly to do with the fact that there is a lack of flexibility in timetabling and partly to do with the fact that the school cannot offer, for example, computing as a subject. It cannot offer the different sciences discreetly which you would be hoping to offer to pupils at level 4 stage. That's part of an explanation if you like.
- Gail Vann And I suppose what my understanding of the Curriculum for Excellence is that pupils have greater experiences within their community. It's about based learning, what do you call it? Place Based Learning. What I would suggest is that if pupils are learning within their community the children that go to Lionel School can learn within their community which is here in Ness. My understanding is that the pupils that are here in Ness don't feel that Stornoway is their community.
- Joan Mackinnon I accept that but there is a lot more to Curriculum for Excellence than just learning in your community. It is about Curriculum for Excellence is not so much about the content, its about the way children learn, definitely but there is also a content aspect to it and it demand that personalisation and choice be offered at an early stage than has previously been the case with the common course for s1 and S2.

Gail Vann My understanding is that Lionel School is looking at that and looking at doing more personalisation and I know for a fact that they are also looking to work more with community groups, for example youth groups in the area that are at present providing opportunities that fit in very neatly with the Curriculum for Excellence, particularly in the health and wellbeing aspects.

Joan Mackinnon Thank you for that

Mike Cowsill Just to change the subject to finance for a moment. Can someone explain why the catering costs in the figures for 2008 report you gave us with £13,255 and in the latest report allocated to the S1/S2 they are £29,000, but there is only one more pupil. Its not me, I am big but its not me eating the food, so could someone just explain is it an error or is there some change in the way the two sets of figures have been produced and the cost allocated against S1/S2.

Robert Emmott I'm not going to speculate. I'm not sure what the answer to that is, I think it might be to do with whether its catering provisions costs and staff costs are together in one and separate in another but I am happy to get back to you with an answer to that question.

Lorna Thompson It says here that parents may elect to have lodgings provided for their child if their journey exceeds 1 hour. How would you deal with the request if all affected children decided to put their child into lodgings?

Joan Mackinnon If the policy says we have to look at it then we would have to look at it case by case.

Lorna Thompson But you have said that, so could my child have lodgings.

Joan Mackinnon If you wish your child to have lodgings we would have to look to provide that for you.

Lorna Thompson So what if we all wanted our children to go for lodgings?

Joan Mackinnon We would have to look at it for all.

Lorna Thompson And who would be responsible for our children?

Joan Mackinnon The legislation about offering lodgings for pupils in schools are governed now by the Care Commission and they are very very strict and the landlady or the landlord would be responsible and that would be part of their undertaking in becoming registered by the Care Commission.

Lorna Thompson Who would fund the cost?

Joan Mackinnon Well obviously the Education Department would have to pick up the bill and the Comhairle would fund the cost.

Lorna Thompson I was told when I was here last year and I asked who would take responsibility for my child if she was to leave the grounds at lunch time. Now I am 27 miles away, I can't stop her and was told the minute they leave the school grounds its not the Nicolson's responsibility. Whose responsibility is it?

Cllr Morag Munro Are talking about lunch time, because I think this is a point that we did look at following the conversations on the consultations that we had before. I think some parents were looking for an assurance that their children would remain in the school during lunch time and we discussed with our legal advisors and with the school Head Teacher about retaining children in the school and what we came up against actually was the Human Rights Legislation. If we were forcing children to stay within that we were infringing their Human Rights so the line that the Comhairle has taken on this is that if a parent wishes their child to remain in school during lunch time that they put that in writing

- to the Head Teacher, the Head Teacher then has the authority to keep that child within the school during lunch time.
- Lorna Thompson So even if there is a 1000 pupils, (inaudible) they know what child, oh well this is such and such, oh well we can stop them. You cannot guarantee that.
- Cllr Morag Munro Well it will be the responsibility of the school if that authority is given by the parent.
- Chris Barrowman I've got a couple of kids in Lionel School. Just following on from Lorna's question about the responsibility of the pupils at lunch times who is therefore responsible for the pupils if they leave the school at lunch time?
- Malcolm Burr Well the general rule is that parents are actually responsible because if at a secondary (comments from the audience - inaudible) no, well it doesn't really matter whether you are 27 miles away or half a mile away because if your child is at school when they go out the gate at lunch time that's an informed choice they can make. As the Chairman said if you really wish the school to enforce a provision whereby your child doesn't leave the school you have to say that positively, you have to write to the Head Teacher and say, look I don't wish my child to leave the premises at lunch time and the school then has the authority to restrict the child, otherwise in law the child is a free agent, they take reasonable choices so they form their own reasonable decisions and that I think how most people would want it to be when you are talking about secondary age children, but you can if you wish ask the school to impose restrictions that you are not able to do yourselves.
- Chris Barrowman Okay thanks, a 12 or 13 year old can take responsible or 11 year old is responsible for his own actions or her own actions wandering around the streets of Stornoway and I'm meant to be responsible for that pupil when I'm 27 miles away. Surely that's a Human Rights issue or a child protection issue or something.
- Malcolm Burr Well I think most secondary children cope with that very well and I think if you are in Stornoway as I am every lunch time you see that. You see children exercising that responsibility generally very well and particularly a lot better than some other areas within Scotland but there is an Act of Parliament called the Age of Legal Majority and that presumes that children over the age of 12 are generally presumed to be able to take reasonable decisions about their own health, safety, where they want to go and where they want to be. If parents don't wish that they can notify the school and the school then has the authority to restrict the child's movements.
- Chris Barrowman Okay thanks, just finally if lets say in theory that a 1000 pupils, that the parents of a 1000 pupils all write into your school and want you to take responsibility for them at lunch time will you be able to cater for those 1000 pupils in a school dining area or able to keep them in the school grounds?
- Cllr Morag Munro The new Nicolson Institute will have a canteen that will cope with the pupil numbers that are there.
- James ? I am a pupil at the Nicolson and right now if every parent wanted their child to stay in during lunch time. I know they don't have the facilities to do that even with this new facility they have opened, the cabin or whatever its called, they still can't.
- Cllr Morag Munro But we are talking about a new Nicolson Institute. We wouldn't be proposing to move children from Lionel; S1/S2 until the new Nicolson Institute was built and it was an enhanced building and an enhanced

facility which will have the capacity to cope with all the needs of the pupils on the roll.

Joan Mackinnon You are right. Although at the moment there isn't enough but what we have found is that when the cabin was put in place to extend the provision, what we have found is that the same number of pupils go for a school lunch as went before the cabin was there, its just that they have spread themselves now between the cafeteria and the cabin so the fact there is better provision has not increased the number of pupils who want to have a meal in the school, but we would have to say that young people in the Nicolson we believe behave very responsibly at lunch times and before school and after.

Unknown female To come back to the issue of the children lodged in Stornoway if any parent here and in other rural school will choose that they want their kids to be lodged in Stornoway do you have enough accommodation in Stornoway and do you have enough vetted persons to look after these kids? And another question will be what will happen with after hour activities? Will they be able to go to after hour activities? Will they be allowed by these vetted persons?

Cllr Morag Munro We had a paper before Education Committee last week talking about this very issue, the issue of lodgings and we now have a policy in place which will allow us if the need arises to access lodgings and it also stipulates the process we have to go through to ensure that any child in lodgings will be safe and properly looked after. If a child is in lodgings in Stornoway they would certainly be allowed to take part in extra curricular activities.

Unknown female Do you have the funding to pay for all these kids to go in lodging? And do you have the person, or do you have the places? So that will happen in two year's time. In two year's time if everybody here will want their kids to go to Stornoway do you have the funding and the places?

Cllr Morag Munro We have two years in which to prepare

Joan Mackinnon Can I just say though, you know on a serious point actually in Uist when parents had the opportunity to ask for lodgings for the pupils, families from Bernera and from Eriskay had that opportunity because the children travel in excess of an hour. None of the parents took that choice and we are not banking on the fact that parents will want their children home every night but it has been our experience that parents on the whole would rather their children come home at night than have them in lodgings.

Alastair Smith I am a former pupil of Cross, Lionel and the Nicolson and now in 2<sup>nd</sup> year at university. You said before that computing is not done in Lionel School and how you have to be prepared for a world now where computing/computers are used everywhere. Lionel School did offer to me a lot of computing benefits as religious education (inaudible) there and other areas such as English. I was more prepared for computing than I thought I would be at the Nicolson and some pupils don't even do computing at the Nicolson and I just believe that how you say that Lionel isn't prepared for teaching computing for standard grades and how you said that the Nicolson is preparing for 3<sup>rd</sup> year , pupils start studying standard grades at Easter time and you had said that pupils had regressed in S1 and S2. How do you prepare pupils to learn what they do in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a shorter time and then prepare them for 3<sup>rd</sup> year? I believe that smaller classes are taught in Lionel than they were in the Nicolson and Lionel School has a great computer room and computing areas and the teachers here are excellent and they offer just as much benefit if not more in a smaller class of pupils while they are here than a bigger

school in a big area such as the Nicolson.

- Joan Mackinnon Thank you for that. Computing was one example. I mean business administration is another, there are other subjects that you know could be offered and are offered in the Nicolson that are not able to be offered in the smaller schools, not because people are unwilling but there aren't the staff and there isn't the flexibility.
- Joanne MacRitchie I have got 3 kids who are being affected by this. I've got a couple of things. First thing is parental choice. I think most parents here want the choice of where their children are being taught and I think that is Lionel School and another thing is, can we look at S1 to S3 in Lionel. Has that been looked at and can you prove that it wouldn't work.
- Cllr Morag Munro When we were looking at the Curriculum for Excellence and the S1 and S2 schools and how we would get around it and how we would be able to deliver it we asked an Educational Consultant to do a study for us and to provide us with options and one of the options we had him to look at was S1 - upgrading our S1/S2 schools to S1 - S3 and his conclusion was that it was not possible and that it was not a viable option because of the numbers that were involved in the Western Isles that was in summary the conclusion that you came to. The other conclusion that you came to was that if we were to upgrade the S1 S2 Schools to S3 schools that it would affect the choice that would then be available in the Nicolson Institute. These were the conclusions that he came to and the consultant concerned was David Alexander and he is the expert on educational provision and particularly for the Curriculum for Excellence.
- Joanne MacRitchie But it hasn't been tested, nobody has said will we try it. No?
- Cllr Morag Munro No, what he did was he looked at the practicalities of being able to achieve it and came up with the conclusion that it was not a viable option.
- Karen Taylor Karen Taylor again. It just occurs to me that there is a wonderful compromise we could come to, you said that it was in Easter term after Easter that the children needed to start their curriculum with the S3s, so why can't our children join the Nicolson in that 3<sup>rd</sup> term. Its long summer days, probably most of us wouldn't mind the children going then. I would give them the two winters here and even if they didn't need to go full time they could maybe go two or three days a week during the Easter term which would get them used to that move to the bigger school. Surely that would be a good compromise at the end of S2.
- Kate Barber I am speaking on behalf of the parent Council at Cross School. Following the recent meeting about the closure of Cross School the parent council put together their ideas about these children who will move into Lionel School then being transferred to the Nicolson at the age of 11 and I'd like to put forward the following points, some which have already been mentioned this evening but I would still like to say them all the same on behalf of the Parent Council. We find the proposals unacceptable on the following grounds. Firstly the distance from Ness to the Nicolson Institute. This would mean that children of 11 years of age catching a bus at around 7.30 with the necessity of getting up at 6.30 in order to achieve this. The bus gets caught in traffic at Laxdale making the children stressed and often late for school on a regular basis, even on days when they have to sit exams. A return journey of over an hour means that some children are not home until 5pm excluding any extra curricular activities. The impact that this would have on children's access to after school clubs and sports, the impact of this on children's health and quality of life and the impact of this on family life. The quality of school transport, the fact

that some children sit 3 on a seat and seat belts are not enforced. The care and suitability of 11 year olds on buses shared by much older children for over 2 hours a day the quality of pastoral care for 11 year olds at the Nicolson Institute particularly at lunchtimes when pupils are unsupervised and free to go into Stornoway. The impact upon lifestyles, health and fitness, the following points illustrate how the proposals will seriously compromise children's health. This contradicts the Curriculum for Excellence aspirations for confident individuals who lead safe and health lives. Spending 2 hours or more on the bus where it would be possible to walk or cycle to the local school, the availability of fast food at lunch time in Stornoway and peer pressure to partake in this. A lack of physical boundaries at lunch time and un-supervision of young children in Stornoway. The inaccessibility of out of school activities due to constraints of bus timetables impact on the length of the school day and effect on other commitments ie: homework, family time and free time. The use of the Curriculum for Excellence and financial reasons as the catalyst for such major changes with wide reaching consequences for children and the local community. Lionel School already offers an effective, broad and successful curriculum at S1/S2 and the Nicolson Institute offers no substantial educational benefits. To summarise, we are of the opinion that the quality of the lives of the 11 year olds will be compromised in many ways by these proposals. Furthermore we have serious reservations about the Council's ability to deliver the adequate pastoral care. We firmly believe that the education of 11 year olds will be jeopardised by the proposals. Education has always been concerned with fulfilling the potential of each individual child. The Curriculum for Excellence is not offering anything new in this respect. However, children cannot possibly reach their full potential if they are not getting adequate rest and time to complete homework, time to participate in family and community life and follow their own interests in sports. Whilst the Curriculum for Excellence enables children to progress at individual levels and even fast track, it is unclear and untested as to what impact this may have on the younger child studying with older children. Academically they may be on the same level but socially and emotionally they may not be compatible. The young child's personal, social and emotional development could be at risk at the cost of achieving higher grades. We are not convinced that this is beneficial. A close study of the curriculum available at Lionel School proved that there would be no educational advantage in pupils from S1/S2 transferring to The Nicolson Institute at this age. The pupils at Lionel School are already offered a wide and varied curriculum, following the Curriculum for Excellence and supplemented with the latest ICT provision, with a fully equipped ICT suite, wireless internet, several PCs, net books, smart boards, we've got additional support needs assessed and monitored regularly with staff, pupils, parents and other supporting agencies which enable pupils with ASN to follow an inclusive education with their mainstream peers whilst supporting their own individual needs. We have gaelic medium education for pupils in the secondary provision in home Economics, Technical Studies, gaelic and media studies. Through the rich tasks option of the curriculum pupils can access media and business studies, incorporating working on the local paper, computer studies, music and drama, outdoor activities, first aid, climate studies, creative crafts and we have a newly re-furbished library enabling the new library facilities to be open to pupils during the day. In addition, pupils at Lionel School also have access to the following wide range of facilities and opportunities which supplement the curriculum. There is a modern swimming pool and excellent swimming instructors to enable pupils to swim in the North of Scotland competitions. A

modern sports facility at Spòrs Nis, which rivals any on the Island, with excellent coaching which has enable pupils to achieve success in badminton, basketball and football. Extended musical and drama opportunities via Taigh Dhonnchaidh which supplements the schools music curriculum, offering pupils to learn chanter, melodeon, accordion, fiddle, keyboard, tin whistle, piano, guitar and drums. This talent was evident in the Mod in which Lionel School achieved several trophies. There is also involvement in the local Gaelic feis concerts and performances. There is archaeology expertise and sites on the door-step and local archaeologists which can access the sites of Viking and iron age interest enabling first hand experiences and active learning. Environmental work and links with the Galson Trust Ranger the local bird reserve and local crofters. Active learning using the planned outdoor classroom and living science area, the existing sensory garden, polytunnel, vegetable garden, local play park, local nature reserve. Strong links with the community and the use of local business expertise; hotels, restaurants, art galleries, shops, post offices focus of the curriculum on unique local aspects which is tweed production, promotion and tourism, links with the local paper "Fiòs" in which pupils have a page published, an activity club for P7+ pupils "Routes and Wings" which provides pupils with hands on fun approach to learning after school and is closely linked to the Curriculum for Excellence through the use of school staff. Furthermore, the school is accessible for pupils with disabilities and toilet provision for disabled pupils is near completion.

I would just like to ask could you please detail what viable alternatives were looked at before this decision was taken as we do believe that, according to the UN convention on the rights of the child, where an obligation on the national government is to ensure that the best interest of the child are a primary consideration in all actions directly affecting children? Thank you.

Cllr Morag Munro

Thank you very much for that. The viable alternatives that were looked at were detailed in 10.2 and as I mentioned before we asked David Alexander to investigate for us viable options including S1/S2 and in fact I think he also looked at upgrading to S1/S6 as well as S1/S3 and he did not find that either option was viable. No decision has been taken. The only decision the Comhairle has made is to go out to consultation. There is no decision.

Kate Barber

Could I just come back on that please in that we believe that alternatives do exist and are still worth pursuing. Ones which would uphold the points raised in the Rural Schools Act ie not compromising the education of young children with unnecessary lengthy journeys. Not threatening the viability and the future of the local communities. We still believe that the option for extending Lionel to include S3 provision, linking in with the Curriculum for Excellence should be looked at, which pupils will still only have one stage of transition due to the proposed closure of Cross Primary School. We feel that perhaps..(round of applause)...if we could maintain S1/S2 provision at Lionel focusing on core subjects and give children perhaps one day per week or per month at The Nicolson Institute to access other subjects which can't be accessed in Lionel such as Latin. We would like to incorporate the idea of increased use of technology into education at Lionel through the use of more laptops and video conferencing with links to the Nicolson Institute. Perhaps to create a new purpose built school on the West-Side specialising in agriculture, tourism, crofting, alternative technologies of wind and wave power, the tweed industries, all unique studies in the Western Isles which would further enhance the future of the Islands.

Cllr Morag Murno	Thank you. Your comments will be in the Report that will go to Education Committee. Thank you.
Iain Macleod	Hi, Iain Macleod, angry parent. I think what the previous lady was trying to say was why are you trying to fix something that isn't broken?
Cllr Morag Munro	Thank you. Well I think that the Director has already given the reasons why we are.....why we believe that there would be educational benefit in moving the children from S1/S2 to The Nicolson.
Iain Macleod	We don't agree with that.
Cllr Morag Munro	That's fair enough.
Joan Mackinnon	We accept that you don't.
Malcolm Macsween	I believe that any educational benefits which I would dispute by the mere fact I know what's happening here in Lionel and I know what's happening in the Nicolson are out weighed completely by the travelling times. Therefore, what I suggest is happening is that the Council, as is well know, is desperate to save money. They are looking at every means possible to save money and so I would say is there not a possibility that funding could be looked for in other areas, locally in the community, if that is the real issue? Rather than trying to window dress it by saying the kids are going to benefit by going to the Nicolson Institute, because I don't believe they do.
Cllr Morag Munro	There is no doubt, and I mentioned that when I first spoke, that we are suffering severe challenges and are facing severe challenges financially and will do for many years to come. But the effect that that will have is that there will be a lessening of resources because we simply wont be able to buy them. So what we are trying to do is make the best use of the resources that we have so that our children are not disadvantaged in any way.
Malcolm Macsween	I understand your answer, but I think part of the problem here is there hasn't been a detailed enough discussion, a meaningful, detailed discussion between the community and the Council about other ways of getting around the issue, if the issue is funding. And if it is as simple as that then we should be talking about whether there are other ways of raising the funding in order to protect Lionel School and the undoubted advantages it has.
Joan Mackinnon	As Councillor Munro said there are financial pressure facing the Comhairle at the moment. However, even if there weren't, personally I would still be saying that pupils would be better in an S1/S6 setting and I would still be discussing this with communities, even if there were no financial pressures.
Malcolm Burr	Just for information Chairman, the Comhairle will be engaging with communities very actively in the latter half of this year on the very issues that were raised there which is the overall financial position and the.....it is to say that the relative balance of services within the community; education, roads, social work and all the rest on just that issue because the financial pressures affecting, not just the Comhairle, but the entire Scottish public sector as we know are going to be very great indeed. So we will be engaging with communities later on that very point.
Joanne Macritchie	Why aren't we allowed to hear the views of the teachers and our Councillors on these subjects because it seems to be that they are gagged? I know they've been meeting with you and they have there own forum to discuss things but we as a community want to know what they think and where they stand, because we feel they should be

speaking out for us.....well I do anyway.

- Cllr Morag Munro As you say the Members of staff have their own forum and they have been consulted and there have been consultation meetings with the staff already, so they have their own forum. As far as the Councillors are concerned as I explained at the start of this meeting it is Comhairle nan Eilean Siar who are going out to consultation here, that was the unanimous view of the Comhairle that the Comhairle would go out to consult. Therefore its not just us up here who are consulting with you it is your local councillors as well and they are here to listen and when the time comes for them to put your view I am sure that they will do that and that will be a Education Committee and at Council when this is discussed. That will be the forum that they will use to put their views forward.
- Unknown female If you are building a new school in Barvas why its not considered why you are making it only a 4 roomed school, why are you not making it big enough to take a secondary school. So to be a secondary school for the Westside.
- Cllr Morag Munro I think there were consultations with this community a long long time ago when there was an agreement to amalgamate Barvas School and sorry Airidhantium into one school on the Westside and that was a decision that was taken a long time ago, before my time in the Council I think and that was in consultation with the community at that time. At this moment in time that school is, the build will start in August we hope on that school and therefore its far to far down the line at this point to think about changing matters.
- Karen Taylor I just want to come back to the point that you made saying that pupils would be better doing an S1/S6 studies within the Nicolson. I can only go on personal research on my own family. We moved up here over 2 ½ years ago and that point my son who was then 11 decided that the thought of living in a tiny community here would be absolutely horrific, there would be nothing to do and he would hate it, so went to live with his father and he went to a large grammar school at the age of 11 in Gloucestershire. He hated it to begin with, got on not too bad and after coming up here for the summer holidays and spending a day at Lionel School decided that he was going to come back and live with us. He has absolutely thrived in the S1/S2 environment here, even after doing a year at a big school. Now he is ready to go to the Nicolson and is really looking forward to the experiences in S3 but I'd like to know where your research is coming from to say that children will be better in that environment within the Nicolson rather than here, because my personal experience is that isn't the case.
- Joan Mackinnon The reason I am saying that is because the S1/S2 common course is no longer going to be in place and its to do with the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence and the way there is S1 to S3 Phase and the senior phase, sorry **(Karen Taylor interrupts (inaudible as no mic))** They have been engaging with the learning outcomes and experiences. Curriculum for Excellence has not been fully implemented in any school in Scotland. Full implementation will start in August 2010. **(Karen Taylor again - no mic)**. Teachers here have been doing what teachers in every other school have been doing. Engaging with the learning experiences and outcomes. Full implementation will start in 2010.
- Helen Macrae I've got a child in Lionel and a child who left the Nicolson a year ago. She went through S1/S2 in Lionel and she ended up doing credit level classes in Stornoway and it was pointed out in her classes, in quite a couple of them that all the children in those classes were all from rural schools, so obviously Lionel was doing something the Nicolson

wasn't.

Joan Mackinnon I would just like to repeat again that attainment at S1 and S2 in the Nicolson was described as good by HMI when they had their last inspection.

Cllr Morag Munro Are there any other questions or points of view? Somebody who hasn't spoken yet, the gentleman down here hasn't spoken yet Donald.

Hugh Macinnes Lionel FP. Former pupil. I wasn't very happy with the previous response. The Director mentioned the challenges facing the Head Master but the Head Master has not had an opportunity to describe how he and his staff would meet these challenges and since this is a consultation meeting we should be privy to the views of the staff on the education of local children.

Joan Mackinnon You are very welcome to discuss with the staff what they feel and you will hear their views, absolutely. This is a public meeting. Your Head Teacher is an employee of the Comhairle.

Cllr Morag Munro All the Head Teachers have actually been consulted over a long period of time about they would implement the Curriculum for Excellence.

Michelle Mason We have actually done the Curriculum for Excellence. Our old area in Fife was one of the first schools to pioneer it on behalf of the Scottish Government last year and I would like to go back to what that lady says about personal experience. We moved up here as well 2 ½ years ago mainly for the smaller school. Some of my children have special needs and when one of my sons first came to Lionel he was at 13% having dreaded his 1<sup>st</sup> 2 years in high school. Lionel completely turned that boy around. He went to 85%. He then has managed to repeat his 2<sup>nd</sup> year in school. This is all through the support and help at Lionel. I would like to ask how could you put finance before a child's education. When does a school building come before the goodness of teachers?

Bernard Chisholm Of course we don't. the reality for your situation as it is for the majority of the parents that I mentioned to in terms of our database is we are very proud of not only the mainstream education, the support we give in additional support needs, the delivery of education through our rural schools and I just would want to say that in terms of that year on year I think we strive to raise our ability in both including children, supporting their education, meeting their additional support needs and seeing that when they leave school they do so with the level of certification and attainment necessary to enable them to enter the world of work. I think on all of these indicators we do well. Now in relation to your, and I don't wish to go into individual circumstances but what I would say is we have similar experience of families moving to all our all schools. Whether they are the largest to the smallest. Now obviously the bigger the school there are bigger challenges in some regards however, that level of individual support that you would receive I would like to think and believe since I have some responsibility for it in additional support needs and inclusion and have regularly seen our HMI Inspections and assessments indicate real strengths in that in the authority and movement forward at the individual school level and at the Nicolson.

Michelle Mason Well my son actually goes to the Nicolson. He has been involved in Inclusion. Your inclusion Manager for this area has been off for the last 5 months. She is off again for the last 4 weeks. Could you tell us how that's putting the parents in inclusion then?

Bernard Chisholm I'm not about to speak about individual employees but I will say this again that we **(Michelle Mason interrupts saying nobody took over her job though)** Well I have to say we are an authority like anybody else people may or may not be off their work but the support that we give and in this regard that support delivered through schools is done with the support of other members of staff and the reality of that provision is that to support young people we need learning support, we do need inclusion. We need early years. We need a full range psychological services and all of our schools in relation to those needs get that level of support that is required. We operate a system that determines that according to need but I think we have been very effective in doing that and both Lionel and the Nicolson would compare in that regard.

Michelle Mason Could you tell me what Level 3 is in the Curriculum for Excellence for us parents.

Joan Mackinnon Level 3 is what would be expected of children when they go into 1<sup>st</sup> year. Level 3, Level 4 would be expected to be covered between S1 and S3 so depending on the ability of pupils, pupils will move through these two levels at different rates so for example a pupil could be ready to start the Level 4 experiences and outcomes at the end of S1, at some point during S1, at some point during S2 maybe into S3, it depends. So that is why you need to have the flexibility to allow young people to move through the level and through the levels at their own rate.

Cllr Morag Munro Thank you. Any other questions?

Mike Cowsill Just something I need to stress to ensure that I've said it and you have understood it. I have a huge concern which is documented by government and other statistics that there will be a detriment to travelling from this school to the Nicolson, nothing to do with either school, to do with the travel issue which will potentially undue the incredibly hard and good work that has raised pupils in this school to the standards that they are at. To make them have to climb another ladder over the next couple of years at the Nicolson whilst your introducing the Curriculum for Excellence, and I think if not in the short term, in the long term it will show in the Nicolson's performance and it will at the same time been at the cost and the price of the children's benefit and education of not gaining what they should get from the Curriculum for Excellence when they could have had it.

Cllr Morag Munro Okay then. Well thank you very much for your contribution. Okay you want....

Donnie Macleod I would just like to ask everybody here present to make their views known by raising your hands and ask for you to basically those of you are in favour of closing the secondary provision in Lionel School to show if you are in favour of closing the school or to closing S1/S2 provision by raising your hands. Nobody raises their hands. Can I now ask then those of you who are in favour of keeping S1 and S2 provision in Lionel School open to show your hands. I think that says it all. 100% for keeping Lionel School secondary provision open. Thank you.

Malcolm MacSween I believe Lionel has an excellent record in delivering Gaelic medium education as evidence has said before at the Mod. I heard people talking there about the excellent quality of the Gaelic spoken and sung by the people from Lionel. I believe that's a long standing tradition. At a time when there is a lot of effort going into protecting the Gaelic language has enough thought been given by the Council to the fact that you may erode one of the last great bastions of the Gaelic

language when so much time is going in on behalf of all of Scotland to protect it. I don't believe that has been thought about enough and I don't see evidence in this report of that.

Joan Mackinnon We are very confident that were the S1/S2 provision in Lionel to cease and pupils were to move to the Nicolson at S1 after coming through Gaelic Medium Education at Lionel which is very good that their needs would be fully met and that the Nicolson is well equipped to deal and deliver high quality Gaelic medium education in subjects and through experiences where pupils can go to subjects and be spoken to by their teachers in Gaelic.

Mr MacDonald Your confidence is appreciated. Is there any evidence from third parties to back that up. Has anything been done about this, are there any reports that you can assure us. In other words how much time has been spent looking at the effect of closing this school will have on the Gaelic language which is already very fragile?

Joan Mackinnon All I can say is that I am confident that it will not have a negative impact.

Mr MacDonald But there is no 3<sup>rd</sup> party reports. Is there anything out there that you can point to. Can you provide that?

Bernard Chisholm In terms of Gaelic. First I acknowledge with you, we are really the heartland of Gaelic and one of the things that we continue to work on is to increase our enrolments in Gaelic. I have to say that over recent years we do see that. Its approximately 38% going into our primaries. Now we do have the opportunity in the Nicolson to give a choice in a number of subjects. Certainly for the instruction in these subjects through the medium of Gaelic more than we do throughout our S1/2 so Gaelic as a strategy that we are promoting starts in the pre-school through primary and into secondary as someone knows they have been various consultations at various times to discuss other approaches to it but certainly we are seeing over recent years that impressive growth and we have no reason to doubt that we are not going to continue to support and see it continue to grow.

Mr MacDonald I wonder what I think your finding in this particular gathering is a very strong support for a small school. A small school as opposed to a big school where children in a small school are known but in a big school are anonymous and with the complications that generates and I wonder in fact if that possibility has been explored with the people of Stornoway some of whom I know would rather their children were in a small school than in a big school. Don't let me argue the merits of the Nicolson against other ones just the basic principle which is buried in what people here certainly are saying that a small school has great benefits and advantages. If its not possible to have a small school because of economics say that, say that and leave it at that. Don't say you get a better education in a big school when parents know that they want their children in a smaller environment and if I can come to what the Chief Executive said, that there is going to be extensive discussion with the communities about how they are going to spend their money between education and social work and roads after the decisions have been taken about your schools. Now that may well be the nature of life, I can't have children when I'm in secondary school, or I can't have children when I'm 70 or 80. There is an order of events in fact which we just have to face in the real world but could I leave the thought with you that you should perhaps look at the possibility of enhancing the small schools with the children of parents who are not in the catchment areas so that they can make them viable. The question I was going to ask did David Alexander say what is the viable size of an excellent school or a Curriculum for Excellence School. He

said its not viable as they are, what size do they have to be. Do they have to be 40 in a year group. I'm quite sure Lionel could gather 40 pupils in every year group. I say that facetiously to some extent but the reality is that parents in other places chose to send their children to schools which are quite far from where they live. Anyway I have said enough. I wasn't asking a question. I will just leave it with you because I don't see evidence of that kind of background thinking in the documentation that's around.

Gail Vann

I would just like to pass comment on 10.4 which is Likely Effect on the Local Community. You seem to write us off saying there will be no significant effect on the local community. You know I don't believe that's right and if you look at the Education Resources Information Centre Research it shows quite clearly that there is quite a definite environmental impact from school closures and I'm sure there are plenty of people in the audience that would identify with the fact that their would be increased out migration, there would be less in migration. There is likely to be other community disbenefits and I feel its totally inadequate for you to say there would be no significant effect.

Cllr Morag Munro

Thank you for that.

Donald MacDonald

I don't know who the lady was who last spoke. My experience from the past is a very indicative one. In 1977/78 there were two year schools on the mainland in a place called Ullapool and they wanted to upgrade the school from two years to four years and they did that and they discovered that the number of people who then stayed on in Ullapool and did not move somewhere else meant that the school rolls in subsequent years were bigger than projected on the basis of what we knew, so there is an impact in out migration which I have to say its not predictable and the result was that Ullapool became not just a four year school but a 6 year school with about 140 pupils all together but I don't know if that's viable nowadays. It was viable in 1980 or something like that when money was plentiful.

Chris Barrowman

Just following on from what Gail said in your statement that there is no detrimental effect to be felt in the community with the closure of S1/S2 in Lionel. Where is the evidence for this statement. There is no evidence. You are not showing any evidence for that statement?

Joan Mackinnon

The school is not closing.

Chris Barrowman

S1/S2 provision sorry.

Joan Mackinnon

The school is not closing and therefore there would still be a school in the community and of course because you have Spors Nis here we know that the school and the Spors Centre is the hub of the community. This is where things would happen and we would see that that still would continue even if S1 and S2 were discontinued.

Chris Barrowman

You feel that there will be no detrimental affect to the community if you remove S1 and S2 age pupils from this area during the day.

Cllr Morag Munro

That's what we feel. I can actually give you some experience of my own. I mean I taught in the 1970s as well and one of the problems that we had in Harris then was that we had a 4 year school in Tarbert and the pupils went from Tarbert 4<sup>th</sup> year to Stornoway and basically the transition was then very detrimental to their education so I do know that transition at the wrong time is detrimental. I know that from personal experience. Also in my own area we had two year secondary schools in both Leverburgh and Scalpay. These were discontinued in the early 1990s and the parents although they were very concerned at the time recognised that it was a good move for

their children. Its not because they don't have a secondary. Its because there was a factory which closed and they were no jobs and the fishing has declined that's why we've got no children in Scalpay.

Mary Rowlands

I'm Mary Rowlands and I'm a parent of 4 children, 3 of who have been through Lionel secondary and one is still there and I would just like to endorse as much as I possibly can how important it is for a child to have small class sizes, more individual attention and no long journey which is detrimental to health. I had my oldest son and went to Lionel and really thrived there. He wasn't easy to deal with having a learning difficulty and when he went to the Nicolson he just wasn't coping and he didn't continue but I just like to say that health is as important as education. You cannot have education without health and if we permit or force 11 and 12 year old and 13 year old children to make that journey every day for 2 years their health will suffer. They will be on the cold winter days, there will be lots of days off and they will miss out and they will just generally go down hill, I would also like to add that there is one question I would like to put to the Committee at the front here who propose that the school be closed. If they were in our position living in Ness in a thriving community which is set to increase in population over the next few years would they themselves be willing to allow a 12 year old child make that journey every day.

Joan Mackinnon

I feel totally unqualified to answer this because I don't have a family, but if I had I wouldn't mind.

Cllr Morag Munro

Well both my children went from a small primary to the secondary and travelled quite a long distance by bus and so I would not have a problem. **(someone in the audience shouts how far?)** 16 miles. **(someone in audience talking - no mic inaudible)**

Mike Cowsill

I would like to say that my children have benefited from both being here in Lionel and at the Nicolson in terms of their education and its no doubt if they had been in England they wouldn't have got anything like the achievements they have achieved so far. Concerns still come though with things like if you reduce the number of schools to a very small number in secondary education and we agree we know there isn't the money to maintain the estate as it currently stands where does the incentive for children to participate in sports and other activities if they are only competing themselves. Whether people agree with the word competition or not there is an incentive to participate if you have a real chance of being in the team and at the smaller schools there are more children that will participate. They might not get in the team but they might go down every night and they might train and get the physical exercise and the health which I unfortunately don't have and haven't had for a long time but they will have that opportunity and my daughter has done it and I know that the larger school she goes to, whether she feels she can compete or not she will put in her mind she is not good enough and other people will take part in it and you put that together with the travel and you will start to see children who currently participate not participate so I have to then ask you the question, hypothetical it may be, maybe its not so hypothetical. What happens if people on the Westside of Stornoway were told their children were to commute across the moor to Barvas to school. How much support would there be from the Council for that? But this is all one way traffic at the moment. There will always be a big school in Stornoway. It's the capital and all this sort of thing but it doesn't really seem to show in the paperwork that that's the only possibility. The paperwork talks a few figures about cost per pupil head which we all know about can vary depending on which little figure you put in which little box, but it doesn't show that there were real alternatives thought with a clear piece of paper and then

discounted and whilst this is a proposal I really feel as the Council that if you take this to the Government because I am sure it will get called in, that you will have to show more evidence that you have been down every avenue and discounted it than you have shown us. This is a very summary document that just gives one liners, we've decided, we've decided. We don't know. We cannot judge from this document because there are no figures in it. There's no quotations, there no nothing. There is a school roll at the end of it and a cost per pupil head. Money and that's it, those are the only figures in the whole document. Everything else is just someone's opinion. I can write opinions and I can spout here all night but I think you want to go home, but please give us something in the next document you produce which actually proves the things you have said in this one, then we can have a discussion.

- Cllr Morag Munro Thank you.
- Lorna Thompson How do we know that the Curriculum for Excellence is actually going to work in the Nicolson if it hasn't been implemented. We've got no evidence of this, so I'd rather see evidence rather than you tell me it's the best for my child to be.
- Joan Mackinnon The things is that the Curriculum for Excellence hasn't been in effect in any school in Scotland to the degree where there is any evidence yet.
- Lorna Thomson Yes but you are saying that the Nicolson will be the best place for my child to go to reach its full potential.
- Joan Mackinnon What I'm saying is that that is my professional opinion.
- Cllr Morag Munro Well thank you very much for your... someone at the back there wanting to have the last question.
- Michelle Mason You recently sent a document to me giving the attainments between the Nicolson and the local smaller schools like Lionel and etc. Now could you explain to me for the last at least 5 years the smaller schools have done attainment a lot better. They have risen, this goes up to 2010. They have risen where the Nicolson has steadily fallen to last year when there was a gradual but very small rise. In essence Lionel has always done better than attainment for S3 and S4 than what the Nicolson has ever done and also could you please explain why the HMI report for S3 to S4 in the Nicolson stated that Level 3 was below the Scottish average and how you justify putting in more children to that.
- Joan Mackinnon Sorry can you repeat that question because I didn't understand it.
- Michelle Mason The HMI report that was done for the Nicolson in 2005.08 was the follow up, It states that the Nicolson in its S3 to S4 attainment was below Level 3 of the Scottish average in the national exam.
- Joan Mackinnon It couldn't have said that because there isn't such a thing as Level 3 in a national exam, so I'm sorry I'm not trying to be difficult. I just don't understand
- Michelle Mason Sorry, Sorry I did get that wrong, sorry.
- Joan Mackinnon I don't understand.
- Michelle Mason It was below the foundation results for the exams were below the Scottish average. The children were clearly failing at the Nicolson yet you want us to send our children into that.
- Joan Mackinnon I'm sorry that is.... Currently the information, its very accurate. The Nicolson out performs the national average and our comparator authority averages in all the measures at SQA examinations.

Michelle Mason Not as good as Lionel, your attainment levels

Joan Mackinnon I'm sorry but I'm sorry Lionel does not present for SQA examinations.

Michelle Mason No you sent me a document recently that stated the attainment of both S1 to S2, it was a graph chart. In this document ..

Joan Mackinnon No no, there was no graph chart for S1 to S2, that was for S4 - S6. It was the SQA examinations that were in the graphs.

Michelle Mason It clearly stated Lionel. How then could you clearly use Lionel in S3 if Lionel does not have an S3.

Joan Mackinnon I'm sorry Lionel wasn't in the graph. It was not in the graph. I'm sorry it wasn't in the graph, because the graph was about Level 3 which is SQA Standard Grade foundation level.

Michelle Mason What did you base the results again the Nicolson. What other Western Isles Schools did you base the results on?

Joan Mackinnon I showed you the Nicolson's examination results compared to the national averages of our comparator authorities. These were the graphs that I sent you and it was to do with SQA examinations. Lionel does not present for SQA examinations.

Michelle Mason Yes I know that but you sent me the Western Isles.

Joan Mackinnon I sent you the Nicolson

Michelle Mason Comparable schools of the Western Isles.

Joan Mackinnon Maybe you and I could have a conversation about that later because I would have to see what it is you are talking about.

Michelle Mason Yes that would be fine, be absolutely fine.

Cllr Morag Munro Well we have come to the end of this meeting I think. I hope you all felt that you had an opportunity to have your say and I would like to thank you all very much indeed for your contributions. The Comhairle will review the proposal, having regard to the HMIE report, written representations that it has received and oral representations made to it at any of the public meetings and as we said before there is a recording of this meeting which will be transcribed and a transcript will be included in the report. The report will be available on the Comhairle website and from Comhairle offices as well as at the schools concerned free of charge. The consultation report together with any other relevant documentation will be considered by the Education and Childrens' Services Committee who will then make a recommendation which will go to full council for approval. Should the Comhairle decide to discontinue S1/S2 stage at Lionel it is required to notify the Scottish Ministers of the decision and provide them with a copy of the proposal document and the consultation report in accordance with the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010 within 6 working days of making the decision. The Scottish Ministers then have a 6 week period from the date of that final decision to decide if they will call in the proposal. Until the outcome of the 6 week call in process has been notified to the Comhairle the Comhairle will not proceed with the implementation of the proposal. The deadline date for receipt of written submissions is 5pm on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2010. These should be sent to Mr Malcolm Burr, the Chief Executive, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Sandwick Road, Stornoway or electronically to schoolconsultations@cne-siar.gov.uk. That email address is in the consultation document if you wish to use it and I would urge those of you, I recognise there's a lot of people here who haven't spoken tonight and I would urge you if you have a submission to make to make it to the addresses I have given before 5pm on 30<sup>th</sup> June. And

there is one things I should have done before I made that closing statement and that is to ask Mr Derek Mackay to summarise the points of clarification and questions that you asked for. Just to check that we have all the questions noted that you asked for. So Derek I'm sorry.

Derek Mackay

I've actually only got one point that required clarification or further information and that was a breakdown of the catering costs for S1/S2 in Lionel. Do you want us to provide that to you through the Parent Council? There was obviously a lot of other points made through the night but they were either points that were coming from the floor or points that were answered here but that's the only one we agreed to come back with further information.

Cllr Morag Munro

Thank you very much then. Thank you

Donald MacDonald

Inaudible. So could you just hold on for a few minutes so we can have a private discussion amongst yourselves, so we didn't have you come back to another meeting. Anybody, are you in favour of that? Or do you want to go just now?