



**SOUTH UIST PRIMARY SCHOOLS CATCHMENT AREA REZONING**

Report by Chief Officer for Education and Children's Services

**PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to provide the Comhairle with an update on the findings of the preliminary consultation about the rezoning of South Uist primary schools and to seek a decision on the next step based on the consultation outcome.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 In February 2024, the Comhairle was in receipt of a formal request from Sgoil Dhalabroig Parent Council to consider a rezoning of primary school catchment areas in South Uist to better reflect enrolments in the area. The matter was considered at the meeting of the Education, Sport and Children's Services Committee in April 2024 and it was agreed to embark on a preliminary consultation at the informal stage of the statutory process.
- 2.2 Following completion of maps of the rezoning area and the design and creation of an online survey, the preliminary consultation was launched in February 2025. This involved the holding of drop-in sessions and open meetings at the two affected schools and the running of an online survey for a period of at least 30 term-time days.
- 2.3 A report has been prepared collating the findings of the preliminary consultation and is appended to the Report. Meetings were well attended and the online survey received seventy-five responses. The high-level outcome was that approximately three-quarters of respondents were entirely opposed to the proposal and a quarter were supportive of it as stated or with changes. The consultation report provides a full analysis of findings.
- 2.4 In respect of the findings of the preliminary consultation, five options are considered in terms of next step and a decision is sought about how the Comhairle wishes to proceed.
  - 1) Proceed with the rezoning proposal as originally stated and commence the formal stage of statutory consultation.
  - 2) Proceed with an amended rezoning proposal based specifically on the old Stoneybridge catchment and commence the formal stage of statutory consultation.
  - 3) Consider a new proposal for a hybrid overlapping catchment and proceed to the formal stage of statutory consultation on that basis.
  - 4) Do not proceed with rezoning and seek a policy or operational resolution to transport issues raised in the preliminary consultation.
  - 5) Take no further action retain the status quo.



- 2.5 If an option is agreed that requires movement to statutory consultation or a change in policy, a report will be taken to the June 2025 series of meetings to approve the respective reports and accompanying documents, proposals or policies required.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Comhairle note the findings of the preliminary consultation and consider the options detailed at paragraph 6.5 of the Report.**

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Appendix: South Uist Primary School Catchment Areas – Report of Preliminary Consultation  
Background Papers: ESCS Committee Report: Review of Catchment Areas – April 2024



## IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	<p>There are no direct financial implications at this stage but it should be recognised that significant officer time will be required to undertake future stages of consultation depending on the option it wishes to take forward.</p> <p>There are potential financial implication to the Comhairle in terms of provision of transport if an option is pursued that changes services. A future report will be able to provide detail once the next step is agreed.</p>
Legal	<p>The rezoning of a school catchment area is a recognised action within the School (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 (Sch 1 para. 4 (a)). As such, consultations must be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Act.</p> <p>The consultation must also consider other statutory obligations upon the Education Authority, such as those defined in the: Education (Scotland) Act 1980; Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000; Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Acts 2004 &amp; 2009; Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006; and the Children &amp; Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.</p>
Staffing	None
Assets and Property	None
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	The recommendation does not impact on any currently identified strategic risks. Once a decision is made, further consideration will be given to risk implications.
Equalities/Child Rights	An <a href="#">Initial Impact Assessment</a> was completed for the preliminary consultation. An equality impact assessment will be required if it is proposed to move to formal statutory consultation in pursuit of options that require that.
Corporate Strategy	<p><b>Support Children, Families and Young People:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure schools and lifelong learning are at the heart of our communities, with particular emphasis on Gàidhlig, digital skills and new technologies.</li> </ul> <p><b>Support Caring and Resilient Communities and Quality of Life:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nurture the safety and resilience of our communities.</li> </ul>
Environmental Impact	None



Consultation	Consultation on this matter is defined in the 2010 Act, as detailed above.

## BACKGROUND

- 5.1 During the consultation on the closure of Stoneybridge School, conducted in 2010, it was identified that the catchment of the school, comprising of the three middle district townships of Stoneybridge, North Stoneybridge and Ormiclete, be merged into the catchment of lochdar School in full, with effect from August 2011.
- 5.2 Following the Comhairle vote to proceed with the closure of Stoneybridge School in 2010, the school closed in June 2011 and the catchment area for lochdar School was subsequently extended to incorporate the three townships, moving the catchment boundary effectively to the junction of the Ormiclete road and the A865 where the Cothrom premises is situated.
- 5.3 A request was received by the Comhairle in February 2024 from Sgoil Dhalabroig Parent Council to consider a rezoning of the middle district area of South Uist. The proposal involved the old Stoneybridge School catchment with the addition of the townships of Peninerine and Snishival.
- 5.4 The Comhairle considered the request at the meeting of April 2024 series of meetings and the Comhairle agreed to undertake a preliminary consultation at the informal stage of the statutory process, as defined in the 2010 School Consultation Act.

## DETAIL

- 6.1 In February and March 2025, Comhairle officers conducted the preliminary consultation on the proposed rezoning of the catchments of Sgoil Dhalabroig and Sgoil an lochdair. The consultation involved the holding of drop-in sessions and open meetings at the two schools. There was also an online survey opened on 3 February 2025 and was available for submissions and comments until 28 March 2025. Maps, reports, background documents and a link to the survey was made available on the Comhairle website.
- 6.2 Upon conclusion of the consultation, a report of findings was prepared that documented views that were expressed at the drop-in sessions and meetings. It also provided a full collation of the responses received from the online survey. The report of findings is included as an appendix to this Report.
- 6.3 The high-level findings showed that the significant majority of responses came from people resident in the catchment of Sgoil an lochdair and the broad overview of comments indicated approximately three-quarters of respondents were not supportive of any change. The remaining quarter were either supportive of the proposal as presented or with a change to align it with the old Stoneybridge School catchment. Reasons, issues and concerns relating to responses are fully documented in the appended report.



- 6.4 In consideration of the findings, officers now seek direction from the Comhairle about how it wishes to proceed next with this matter.
- 6.5 Officers have considered five potential options for the next step in the process, as detailed below.

**1) Proceed with the rezoning proposal as originally stated and commence the formal stage of statutory consultation.**

The first noted option is to note the findings of the consultation and to proceed to the statutory consultation stage using the proposal as currently stated. Whilst this is a consideration, it is clear from the responses to the preliminary consultation that there are significant concerns and a lack of support for this option. Should this be the preferred route, an updated Proposal Document would be required to be agreed at the June series of meetings ahead of commencing statutory consultation.

**2) Proceed with an amended rezoning proposal based specifically on the old Stoneybridge catchment and commence the formal stage of statutory consultation.**

There was feedback received in the preliminary consultation that suggested continuing with the rezoning but changing the consultation area to only include the old Stoneybridge School catchment. This would remove the townships of Peninerine and Snishival from the area and retain them within Sgoil an Iochdair catchment. The remaining townships of Stoneybridge, North Stoneybridge and Ormacleit would continue to be included in the consultation. The amended proposal would continue to be subject to full statutory consultation and would have financial and contractual implications for provision for entitled school transport.

**3) Consider a new proposal for a hybrid overlapping catchment for the middle district and proceed to the formal stage of statutory consultation on that basis.**

A potential revised proposal that has been identified since the preliminary consultation is to create an overlapping catchment in the middle district of South Uist where the area identified in the current proposal is zoned to attend either school by parental choice. This may address the concerns of Sgoil Dhalabroig but will likely continue to see opposition in relation to Sgoil an Iochdair. As this would still be a formal catchment change, it would be subject to full statutory consultation. The proposal would also have financial and contractual implications for provision for entitled school transport in perpetuity.

**4) Do not proceed with rezoning and seek a policy or operational resolution to transport issues raised in the preliminary consultation.**

In respect of feedback noted in the consultation about finding a solution that doesn't involve rezoning. There is an option that directs officers to explore potential amendments or clauses to existing policies that would assist in resolving issues that were deemed to be at the source of the need to consult. Any resolution identified would be reported to the next committee series for final consideration.

**5) Take no further action retain the status quo.**

Pursuit of this option will conclude the current consultation process and confirm that catchment areas will remain as they currently are. Matters relating to placing requests and school transport will be taken forward as per existing policies.

- 6.6 Should an option from 1-3 be selected from the list above, a full statutory consultation will be required as the rezoning of a school catchment area is a recognised action within the School (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 (Sch 1 para. 4 (a)). This is a significant operational exercise. A report will be required



to be taken to the next series of meetings to set out the consultation process, approve the Proposal Document and agree final progression to this stage.

- 6.7 If option four is selected, officers will explore policy amendments and will present an updated policy for approval at the June series of meetings.

## CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Officers have concluded the preliminary consultation, as requested, and a full report of findings has been provided. A decision is now sought, in consideration of these findings, about how the Comhairle wishes to proceed. Options have been proposed for doing so within this report.

