



The
Highland
Council
Comhairle na
Gaidhealtachd

SERVING The Highland Community

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Education, Culture and Sport Service – Spring 2006

Seirbheis Foghlaim, Cultair Agus Spors - Earrach 2006

Dear Colleague

I have pleasure in enclosing our Spring Newsletter which gives you an indication of some of the work that is currently being progressed in the Service.

I hope that you find it helpful and informative.

Bruce

*Bruce Robertson
Director of Education, Culture and Sport*

Remember to use our Website www.highland.gov.uk where you can see more news and information.

Energy Management – Who is doing it anyway?

Well here we are folks, Petrol and Diesel nearly £5 per gallon, electricity prices up, gas prices up, global warming, new wind farms and the Nuclear Power debate. All up front, in the news, topics of conversation and a will to do something about it. Or is there? Not to mention Climate change, has anyone noticed this year that all the usual seasonal flowers have appeared and are almost over and yet at the time of writing there is very little foliage on the trees.

12 months ago, an Energy Management Working Group was set up in order to promote improvements in the Council's Energy consumption and, at the same time commit to reducing the Council's Carbon footprint through active sustainable measures ranging from sustainable energy

solutions for new buildings and refurbishment through an Energy Performance Plan identifying the need for behavioural change and a different approach in how we use energy.

OK stop reading this right now; look up and around you, are the lights on, do they need to be, how warm is it, what's left switched on? Heard it all before? Yes, so have I but the message is the same, unless we do something then we are building both short and long term legacies that will impact on us in our lifetime and on future generations in the years to come.

Short term impact, simple: energy costs money, is in the hands of providers over which we have no control, the more you spend on energy the less disposable income we have for the basics in life. Long term impact- no fossil fuel resources, global warming, rising sea levels and changes in the weather to name but a few. Reminds me of look after the pennies and the pounds will look after themselves, so we need to concentrate now on the short term with an eye on the future if we are even going to achieve anything.

Well, what in ECS have we done to date? Behavioural change is the first step, which has involved Director Presentations at Area Forum, poster production and circulation, identifying the top 100 energy users, circulating website information and I am sure a number of you will have been visited by the 'energy police.'

To date response has been mixed. Some leisure facilities have produced Energy Management Action Plans, some schools and pupils have brought energy

management and behavioural change to the front through whole school approaches and using the curriculum. However, if you are one of the ones who bothered to look up and around you and identified that we are wasting energy, then you know what you have to do. It is simple really, turn it off, turn it down and don't leave it on standby when you know you are not going to use it. Go ahead and break the 'energy use habit' by becoming an 'energy police' special constable using your common sense and getting information from the following web sites.

www.carbontrust.co.uk/home.html
www.est.org.uk/schools/involved/
www.thecarbontrust.co.uk/energy/pages/publication_search.asp?PubID=3509#

www.carbontrust.co.uk/home.html
http://www.thecarbontrust.co.uk/energy/pages/page_203.asp

Brian Hemming
Estates Strategy Manager

2007 Update

Preparations for Highland 2007, the year when Scotland celebrates Highland culture, are developing apace.

Highlights of the main events programme will include a spectacular opening ceremony marking the old Scots New Year, an International Military tattoo at Fort George, the staging of a brand new Scottish musical, the World Mountain Biking Championships, a major exhibition from the National Museums, Galleries and Libraries (in a specially revamped Inverness Museum), the World Highland Games Championship, a Moray Firth flotilla, concerts, cèilidhs and much, much more. Community groups and organisations have also been awarded over £2,000,000 to enable them to develop their own, local events and activities.

The work of the Service for Highland 2007 is also picking up. As the result of a competition for young people to choose its name, the Cultural Pledge is now called the Highland Promise/ An Gealladh Mor. Congratulations to the pupils of Knockbreck Primary School for coming up with the winning suggestion!

The Highland Promise/ An Gealladh Mor will comprise a suite of cultural activities in which all young people have the opportunity to participate and an additional menu of activities from which they can choose. The Cultural Pledge is the Council's main direct contribution to Highland 2007, so everyone in the Service is likely to have some part to play in helping make it happen. Planning will be done through Associated School Groups, by teams of staff from across the Service. This is one of the first times that this approach has been taken across Highland; Highland 2007 will therefore have a major effect in changing not just our view of culture, but how we work together.

Ian Murray
Head of Community Learning and Leisure

ECS – Revenue Budget

The 2006/07 Revenue Budget is £189.664M an increase of £3.015M (1.61%) over the equivalent 2005/06 figure. However, this is the tightest financial settlement for a number of years. In order to meet the 2006/07 budget target figure it was necessary to identify savings and efficiencies of £6.863M.

The delivery of these savings will impact on all sectors of the ECS Service, although every attempt will be made to protect front-line service delivery.

The financial settlement for financial year 2007/08 is anticipated to be as tight as that for 2006/07 and as a result work on that budget will begin in May 2006.

Ron Mackenzie
Finance Manager

21st Century Schools Improvement Programme - Capital Plan

The Service has been successful in its bid to the Budget Working Group for additional funding for the period from 2006/07 to 2009/10.

We have received an additional £23.5m bringing the total capital funding to £59.5m.

In addition to existing commitments, this funding has allowed the Service to plan for: -

- A major £10m upgrade at Lochaber High School
- Extensions to Inverness Royal Academy and Culloden Academy
- Replacement of some of our poorest quality Primary School Buildings
- Refurbishment of up 6 Secondary Schools
- A programme of refurbishment of CLL facilities

This Capital Programme along with the PPP Programme and the 2007 legacy projects such as the Archive Centre represents a major investment in our facilities and in Highland Communities.

Hugh Fraser
Head of Support Services

21st Century Schools Improvement Programme – PPP2 Initiative

After three years of negotiation, the PPP2 schools' contract was signed on 30th March 2006. This contract is for the design, construction and facilities management (cleaning, utilities, janitorial, and all building maintenance) of eleven schools, listed below. The annual fee (called the Unitary Charge) will be £15.725m per annum over the 30 year life of the contract.

School	Start on Site	Construction Completed & Services Commence	Grass Playing field available for use
Cawdor Primary	5/6/06	23 July 07	30 June 08
Culbokie Primary	8 May 06	26 March 07	28 Sept 07
Dingwall Academy	10 April 06	12 May 08	30 Sept 09
Drummond School	21 May 07	2 June 08	30 Sept 09
Gaelic Medium Primary, Inverness	22 May 06	30 April 07	28 Sept 07
Primary at Inshes, Inverness	10 April 06	30 April 07	28 Sept 07
Kinlochleven High and Primary	5 May 07	30 June 08	30 Sept 09
Millburn Academy	22 Jan 07	22 Sept 08	30 Oct 09
Portree High	10 April 06	12 May 08	30 Sept 09
Resolis Primary	8 May 06	2 April 07	28 Sept 07

Turf cutting ceremonies are taking place at a number of the sites – the first was at Dingwall Academy on Thursday 20th April, when Councillor Magee, Convener of the Council, along with two first year pupils, cut the first turf.

In reaching this stage of the project, ECS would wish to thank all those involved across the Council Services – Property & Architectural, Finance, Corporate, Transport Environmental and Community, and Planning and Development Services.

Ken Allan
PPP Project Officer

High Life ~ Young Scot

During May and June we will pilot the issue of High Life ~ Young Scot cards across as many primary schools as possible. This will allow P7 pupils use of the card throughout the summer holidays and therefore they will

be able to make the most of the discounts, library and leisure facilities. Cards will be issued through the schools, using a similar system to that used by the Secondary Schools. Any P7s who miss out will be able to apply for their card at the beginning of secondary school.

New cards and *Premier* packs have now been distributed to all 1st year pupils who applied and 4th year pupils have received the more age related *Original* packs.

The new National Entitlement Card went live at the beginning of April and is initially part of the Scotland wide free bus travel for older and disabled people. As the card begins to encompass other services it will replace any existing cards. Young people who are registered disabled will be able to apply for their combined travel and High Life ~ Young Scot cards through the Highland Council Service Points.

Mike Jones
Development Officer, Dialogue Youth

Standards and Quality Report 2002-2005

The Education, Culture and Sport Committee in January 2006 approved the Standards and Quality Report for the three year period 2002-05.

This report details the wide range of activities ongoing in Highland and the overall positive performance across the range of National Priorities in our schools and establishments over the last three years. This is based on looking at our performance in relation to our comparator authorities and other national performance data.

The standards achieved in Highland are the result of the collective work of pupils and staff – both teaching and support staff working in collaboration with other service staff, parents and carers. The report acknowledges the significant strengths within the service and identifies priorities within the context of Ambitious, Excellent Schools, the Curriculum Review from 3-18 and the significant developments in 2007 relating to the Highland Year of Culture.

A copy of the report will shortly be circulated to all schools and establishments and is also available on www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/yourservices/educationcultureandsport.

Donnie Macdonald
Head of Education

Student Placements

As part of the ongoing teacher recruitment drive, we continue to work hard at persuading universities to send students to Highland for school experience placement. Past experience shows that many students who had not previously considered Highland as a possible place of future employment will do so after experiencing life in a Highland school and community. Add to this the age profile of our teaching complement – up to 50% will retire within the next 10 years – and the urgency of recruitment is brought into sharp profile. So.....the more students the better!

The universities are increasingly proactive in allocating students to Highland schools, to the extent that we have dramatically increased the total number of student placements this session. Indeed, we are currently in the middle of a major exercise to chart precise statistics for both primary and secondary sectors. Initial data points to not only a dramatic increase in placement numbers, but also to a much wider range of schools being used. This is perhaps the most encouraging aspect of the student placement scheme, in that many more rural schools are now being given the opportunity to host students. While many teachers are initially apprehensive about the process, never having seen a student in the school before, the overwhelming response is extremely positive with both school and student benefiting enormously from the experience.

Many of the students we have seen in Highland this session are now looking to come back to Highland as probationer teachers – a further positive and very welcome spin off from the student placement scheme.

Moira McCarrell
Quality Development Officer
(Strategic Initiatives)

Probationers

One of the most encouraging sights this session was to see around 100 new probationers gather in the Council chamber for their induction day last August. This session has seen a significant increase in the number of probationer teachers in Highland compared to the previous year. In total, 47 secondary and 62 primary probationers took up position on 15 August 2005 and are making a real impact in Highland schools. They are making good progress and many are now looking for employment opportunities with us. To this end we recently advertised 30 secondary vacancies, ring-fenced to applicants within Highland, including probationer teachers. The closing date for these vacancies has passed, and recruitment is well underway. A similar advert for primary probationers is being planned and will be out in schools by mid-May with a view to retaining as many of this year's primary cohort as possible.

The next step in the recruitment process is planning for next session. So far, we have made our bid to the Scottish Executive for next year's probationers, and expect to have confirmation of who has been allocated to us by around 23 May. Once again, we are looking forward to receiving a large number of new probationer teachers to Highland, with the expectation of welcoming at least as many as last year, and possibly more.

Elaine Kirkham
Principal Staffing Resource Officer

Parental Involvement Bill

The Parental Involvement Bill is progressing through its final stages in the Scottish Parliament, with final amendments currently being made. Assuming all goes

well, the Bill should receive Royal Assent around July 2006 and would take effect in August 2007. In the meantime, local authorities are consulting widely with parents on the Bill's implications. In Highland, we are midway through a series of seven parental consultation evenings in Portree, Dingwall, Wick, Inverness, Grantown, Fort William and Dornoch.

The Bill aims to provide a much more flexible system for parental representation than that provided by current School Board legislation and will also provide a much more fit for purpose set of procedures for the appointment of Head Teacher and Depute Head Teacher posts. During session 2006-07, we will be preparing a new scheme for Parent Council's, which will replace the School Board system, with a view to new arrangements being in place for August 2007.

Moira McCarrell
Quality Development Officer
(Strategic Initiatives)

Children's Services

Significant activity continues with regard to integrated children's services:

Getting it Right for Every Child

Highland has agreed to be the national pathfinding authority for implementation of 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (GIRFEC) - which will be rolled out across the rest of Scotland over the next two years. The project will develop a seamless response, assessment, planning and review process for all children, and a more user friendly, less bureaucratic approach.

Changes in practice and culture, with associated new processes, will take time to establish - but good practice models already exist within Highland. Over the next few weeks the new GIRFEC team will

gather together evidence of structures to develop tools and build models with clear routes of staged and tiered intervention, which will highlight best practice. The challenges ahead are immense but the philosophy reflects concerns and issues which many teachers and other front line workers have expressed for years. The project plan and more information is available at www.forthighlandschildren.org

Child Protection Follow Up Inspection

Last year's child protection inspection concluded that 'children and young people in Highland are well protected'. HMle Services for Children have confirmed that the follow-up visit will take place in the week of 5 June. This will involve meetings with staff, visits to services, observation of practice and the examination of records. Those staff who will be directly involved will be informed once the detail of the inspection timetable has been confirmed.

Early Years Review

The Joint Committee has reaffirmed the direction of the ongoing review of Early Years Services, involving a far reaching improvement agenda for sustainable services that reflect both community aspirations and resource requirements, with: wherever possible, the local Primary School as the focus for the delivery of Early Years Services, including wraparound provision, thereby retaining their vibrant and viable position in communities; a mixed economy of local authority, voluntary sector and private sector provision, with joined up management structures; the recognition that the overall number of provisions must decrease while the quality and range of services will increase. The Joint Committee also agreed a workforce development strategy, and training guides will be issued to all staff in the early year's sector.

Evaluation of the Integrated Community School Approach

UHI Millennium Institute have completed the analysis of the recent staff survey on implementation of the Integrated Community School Approach, and it makes impressive and reassuring reading, confirming that the roll-out has had 'significant impact' on the school curriculum, provision for health and wellbeing, links with local communities, joint working practices, and support and interventions for vulnerable children.

The full report, which took account of 220 completed responses, is available at: <http://ntintra1/minutes/headquarters/children/reports/21April06/cyp12%20extra.pdf>

Bill Alexander
Head of Children, Young People and Families

ICT Developments

Highland Virtual Learning Community (HVLC)

Online digital courses. We are developing online digital courses to support pupils. The whole of the Intermediate 1 Biology course has been digitally filmed and is online. It will also be available on DVD. Pupils can use the web site to work through the course, reinforce their lessons at anytime, download worksheets and complete online quizzes and tests. The online course is available at <http://www.biology1.highlandschools.org.uk>

From next August the Advanced Higher Physics course will be digitally filmed and made available to AH pupils via video podcast. Also through the ODL Unit pupils will be able to follow the Intermediate 2 Gaelic Learners course. This is an online course with online tutor support. We are currently in discussions to provide more online digital courses to support pupils in other subjects.

SSDN Scottish Schools Digital Network (SSDN)

Over the last two years ECS staff have been involved in detailed discussion with the national SSDN team to deliver a range of services, applications and content to teachers, pupils and education managers across Highland.

The Scottish Schools Digital Network (SSDN) is made up of three key initiatives.

The National Interconnect – a broadband network connecting all 32 Scottish education authorities

The Content Delivery Infrastructure – file storage systems in schools and authorities that will speed up delivery of digital resources for use in the classroom.

The National Intranet (SSDN) – an integrated package of services and applications for teaching, learning and education management, all within a secure online environment.

Timescales

Testing / piloting of SSDN begins Second quarter of 2006
Training of mentors begins Third quarter of 2006. SSDN roll-out begins First quarter of 2007
Implementation across all Highland Schools completed December 2008

Further information about SSDN can be found by visiting the SSDN web site at <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/ssdn>

Pathfinder

The Pathfinder project is a working partnership with Highland Council, Orkney Islands Council, Shetland Islands Council, Argyll and Bute Council, Moray Council and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

This project will secure a managed broadband network services to

schools, libraries and Council administration locations in the Highlands and Islands Pathfinder area. The first priority of the procurement is to connect all schools. Pathfinder aims to award a contract in June 2006. The roll out of connections to the broadband network will begin in autumn 2006 and have high-speed broadband installed in all targeted locations within the Highlands and Islands by autumn 2008.

Further information about the project can be found by visiting the Pathfinder web site at <http://www.pathfindernorth.co.uk>

Jim Henderson
Virtual Learning Co-ordinator
Gairloch High School

Am Baile
Teacher Resources Coming
Soon
www.ambaile.org.uk

The Highland Libraries Am Baile team have been working hard to create a new teaching resource for the classroom. The education section will provide teachers and students with the following topics to learn more about the Highlands and Islands.

Celts, Picts and Norse /
Clearances / Crofting / Energy /
Famous Highland Personalities /
Farming / Fishing / Highland Crafts /
Religion / St.Kilda / Tourism/
Travelling People

Questions and worksheets will be accessible from the website in both English and Gaelic.

The resources will be available for school year 2006/07 but if you would like to take part in the initial

phase of testing please email ambaile@highland.gov.uk for further information.

Maggie Johnstone
Library Support Unit, Inverness

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Award. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is a voluntary, non-competitive and flexible programme of cultural and adventurous activities for all young people, whatever their background or ability.

Highland has a long tradition of offering the award and has actively built on this provision in recent years to offer the award in a wider range of settings to a wider range of young people.

In its 50th Anniversary year we are planning a range of events that mark the contribution of volunteers and staff to running the award, recognise award participants, attract new sponsors but also look at how we can broaden the uptake of the award. We hope to be able to offer the award to any young person that wants to do it.....in fact as a programme for 14-25 year olds maybe some staff could give it a go!

For further information on all aspects of the Award and the 50th Anniversary events please contact

Pablo.mascarenhas@highland.gov.uk, Principal Youth Development Officer on 01463 702026 or visit <http://www.theaward.org/>
Pablo Mascarenhas
Principal Youth Development Office

The Gaelic Revival – The Second Phase

A major conference was held by the Council in September 2005 to mark 20 years of Gaelic medium education [GME] in the Highlands. The main focus was the proposition, now widely accepted by theorists and practitioners alike, that, while languages can be saved from extinction by the schools, they need to be re-established in the home and community if they are to survive in the longer term.

There is a growing awareness of this in Scotland, with the Council

among the prime movers in this second phase of development as it was with GME in the 1980s. Following the conference, an action plan was drawn up, which was agreed with the main Gaelic agencies, and now two projects have been launched to take this further.

The first of these is an audit of the opportunities that children in GME have to use Gaelic in their communities and how this can be improved. The second aims to raise awareness of the importance of using Gaelic in the home and of re-establishing the traditional process of inter-generational language transfer with the next generation .

D J Macleod
Quality Development Officer,
Gaelic

Successes

As usual there have been some fantastic successes right across the service, far too many to mention. Here are but a few....."

1. Elgol Primary School in Skye has become the first school in the Highlands to win the coveted Green Flag environmental award three times.
2. Kirsty Lobban, P5 North Kessock Primary recently won the under 11 Scottish Squash Singles title.
3. Lochaber High School Under 18 boys Hockey team won the Scottish Cup Final at the National Hockey Centre in Peffermill, Edinburgh on 2 March 2006.
4. Bodega, a group of young musicians formed at the National Centre of Excellence in Traditional Music at Plockton High School has won the BBC Radio 2 Young Folk Award for 2006.
5. The target of achieving Health Promoting School Status for all Highland Schools by December 2005 was met.

Bruce Robertson
Director of Education, Culture and Sport
8 May 2006