

## Highland Council, Care and Learning Service

### Public Consultation Meeting Minute – Portree ASG GM Catchments Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2017, Dunvegan Village Hall

**Chairperson:** Cllr John Finlayson, Vice Chair, People Committee

**Highland Council:**

Norma Young (Area Care and Learning Manager-West),  
Ian Jackson (Education Officer, Care and Learning)  
Jenny MacRae (Business Support)

**Attendees:**

Mrs Marion MacGregor – Class Teacher & Parent  
Miss Emma Jane MacAskill - Parent  
Mrs V Parfitt – Head Teacher, Dunvegan Primary

**Press:** None

1. Welcome
2. The Chair Introduced himself and those on the platform (Norma Young, Area Care and Learning Manager, Ian Jackson, Education Officer and Jenny MacRae, Business Support) and asked whether anyone needed another copy of the paper
3. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the proposal to formally establish a Gaelic Medium Catchment for Portree Associated Schools Group (ASG) as set out in the recommendation to the proposal Paper.

The proposal has been issued as a result of new statutory guidance on Gaelic Medium Education published earlier this year.

4. Education Officer, Ian Jackson, described the consultation process:

The consultation process is set down in legislation, is a lengthy process and this is part of a six week public consultation period.

The meeting tonight is the final of three that have been held on the island.

Following the closure of the public consultation period, we then consult for three weeks with Education Scotland. In that time they will appoint an inspector to assess the educational merits of the proposals and will visit the schools.

The process will run until the end of January 2018. Following this, we will review the responses, and a Final Report will be published five to six weeks prior to being submitted to the People Committee. This will allow a 3-week period for further representations by the public.

We intend to submit the final proposal to Committee on the 30<sup>th</sup> May 2018, after which it will be sent to a meeting of the full Council. If Members ratify the documents the process will then be concluded.

5. Norma Young, Area Care & Learning Manager, gave a brief background report.

Discussions were held about a catchment area when it became clear that the New Gaelic School was going to start in Portree and part of that, for Highland Council, was protecting the status of other Gaelic Medium Schools because we didn't want there to be a drift coming into the schools. However we are very mindful of the 1980 Education Act, and through that, parents can make a placing request. There is a placing request policy in Highland and we would use that if necessary if parents wish to do so.

The Education Officer drew up a very detailed plan, had consultations with a lot of communities and practically every school catchment within Highland catchment area has access to Gaelic Medium Education. In this particular paper there is one school which will not have direct access, and that's Raasay, purely because of the logistics of it. However, if a parent wished their child to access Gaelic Medium Education at the age of 4 or 5 and were happy for their child to travel on the ferry, we would accommodate that. The Education Officer drew up some detailed plans in terms of travel times, these are notional travel times, to work out what travel would really look like for each of the different schools in the area, and Raasay is the only one where the children would need to be away early in the morning.

6. The Chair opened meeting to the floor:

VP – What is the rationale behind this consultation process?

IJ – Bòrd na Gàidhlig have issued statutory guidance that we should create Gaelic Medium catchment areas. We have had an informal arrangement for a number of years, and this Proposal basically formalises those arrangements.

VP – What would happen if a GM pupil from Dunvegan wanted to go to Portree? Would this preclude them from going to Portree?

IJ –No. A Placing request would have to be submitted and transport would not be provided to Portree as Dunvegan is the pupil's catchment school.

Normally the request would be granted but on occasion, it can be refused if there is a financial cost to the Council e.g. an extra teacher was required or there was not enough space in the class.

VP – The whole process will provide greater clarity. Have you had any responses to the proposal?

IJ – Apart from pupil responses, so far we have had one response, from Raasay PS Parent Council. Raasay are not part of this arrangement due to their location. As of yet, there have been no expressions of concern.

NY – Highland Council has a clear Placing Request Policy in place for English Medium schools and for continuity, this will be the same for Gaelic Medium.

IJ – For example if you lived in Struan, Edinbane or Knockbreck, and you wanted GM Education, you wouldn't require a Placing Request to attend Dunvegan Primary, but you would if you lived in those catchments and wanted your child to attend Dunvegan PS for EM education.

NY – if you lived in Portree and wished your child to go to Kilmuir, Broadford etc. a Placing Request would be required and parents would require to transport their children.

Skye is quite unusual in that it has a number of schools providing GM Education and by default; catchment areas have already been recognised. This consultation will provide clearer guidance for parents and school staff.

7. The Chair advised meeting that any submission/ representations are to be sent to Norma Young by Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Record of meeting will be made available at next People's Committee.

Chair thanked all for coming and closed the meeting (7.10pm)

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