

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

The proposal is to establish a catchment area for Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar, and a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Lochaber High School

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS STATEMENT

THIS IS A PROPOSAL PAPER PREPARED IN TERMS OF THE EDUCATION AUTHORITY'S AGREED PROCEDURE TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010

INTRODUCTION

The Highland Council is proposing, subject to the outcome of the statutory consultation process:

- To establish a catchment area for Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar. The new Gàidhlig Medium (GM) catchment will overlay the current catchments of Banavie Primary School, Caol Primary School, Inverlochy Primary School, Lundavra Primary School, Roy Bridge Primary School, Spean Bridge Primary School, and St. Bride's Primary School
- To formalise the current arrangements relating to Gàidhlig Medium Education (GME) in related secondary schools, under which the catchment area for Lochaber High School will apply to both Gàidhlig Medium and English Medium education, and under which pupils from the St. Bride's PS catchment (part of the Kinlochleven Associated School Group) have the right to attend Lochaber High School to access GME, provided they have previously attended Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar.
- Existing primary school catchments for the provision of English Medium education will be unaffected.
- The proposed changes, if approved, will be implemented at the conclusion of the statutory consultation process.

If implemented as drafted, the proposed catchment for Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar will include all of the primary school catchments within the Lochaber ASG, except for that of Invergarry Primary School. The distances and travel times to Fort William from locations within the Invergarry catchment make it unlikely that GM provision would be attractive to parents of primary school age children, and dedicated transport from the Invergarry catchment could result in excessive cost being incurred.

Any identified parental demand for local provision of GME from within the Invergarry catchment would be assessed in accordance with the Education (Scotland) Act 2016.

GME is not offered within the Kinlochleven ASG, which is adjacent to the Lochaber ASG. One of the schools within the ASG, St. Bride's PS, has a catchment area that extends between 6 and 15 miles from Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar. These

distances are within the range of the current informal transport entitlement for the purpose of access to GME.

There are four other EM catchment areas within the Kinlochleven ASG – Duror, Ballachulish, Glencoe and Kinlochleven Primary. Dedicated transport from the areas covered by these catchments could result in an unacceptably high level of additional cost.

Currently there are children travelling from these catchments to GME in Fort William, using a bus from North Ballachulish and making their own way to there. Highland Council are prepared to continue this arrangement, subject to space being available. If so, children would be transported free of charge but parents would need to arrange to transport their children to the Lochaber High bus. There would however be no “right” of access to transport.

Any identified parental demand for local provision of GME from within the Kinlochleven ASG would be assessed in accordance with the Education (Scotland) Act 2016.

Similarly, there is currently demand from Ardgour, (within the Ardnamurchan ASG) to attend GME in Fort William. Highland Council are prepared to continue this arrangement and grant access to existing High School transport from Nether Lochaber. This would be on the basis that the provision in Fort William is more accessible than the GME provision for the ASG, located at Acharacle Primary. It would be a parental responsibility to arrange for children to be at the bus stop at Corran Ferry Road End. From the north end of the catchment, the Treslaig – Ft Wm bus (or Camusnagaul Ferry) would be a more convenient route and transport could be offered from there on the same basis. As with Kinlochleven, children would be transported free of charge but there would be no automatic right to transport.

Any identified parental demand for local provision of GME from within the Ardgour Primary catchment would be assessed in accordance with the Education (Scotland) Act 2016.

SUMMARY OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Proposal Paper Published

The proposal paper will be available for inspection, free of charge, at:

- Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar
- Fort William Public Library
- Caol Public Library

and published on the Highland Council website:

www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

Copies of this Proposal Paper are also available on request from:

Business Support Team
Care and Learning Service
Highland Council
Camaghael Hostel
Fort William
PH33 7NE
E-mail: Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk

To request this information in an alternative format, e.g. large print, Braille, audio formats, or suitable language, please also contact the Business Support Team, Care and Learning Service, Camaghael Hostel, Fort William, PH33 7NE

Formal notice of the Proposal and relevant information will be given and be made available, free of charge, to the consultees listed as follows:

- (i) Parents of pupils attending Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar, including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (ii) Staff of Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar;
- (iii) The Parent Councils of Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar; Banavie Primary School; Caol Primary School; Invergarry Primary School; Inverlochy Primary School; Lundavra Primary School; St. Columba's RC Primary School; Spean Bridge Primary School; Lochaber High School; Ardgour Primary School; Ardnamurchan High School; Ballachulish Primary School; Duror Primary School; Glencoe Primary School; Kinlochleven Primary School; Kinlochleven High School; and St. Bride's Primary School
- (iv) The Head Teachers of each of the schools listed above.
- (v) Members of Parliament and Members of the Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal;
- (vi) Trade union representatives;
- (vii) All Community Councils for the areas covered by the Proposal;

- (viii) Bòrd na Gàidhlig;
- (ix) Comunn na Gàidhlig;
- (x) Education Scotland;
- (xvii) Highland Youth Convenor
- (xviii) Fèisean nan Gàidheal
- (xix) Croileagan Grianach
- (xx) Stramash Outdoor Nursery
- (xxi) Little Learners Nursery

Advertisement in Local Media

A notice announcing the public meeting will be placed in the *Lochaber Times* and on the Highland Council's Facebook page.

Consultation Period

The consultation for this Proposal will run from Monday 29 January 2018 and will end on Friday 16 March 2018. This period allows for the statutory minimum of six weeks, including at least thirty school days.

Public Meeting

A public meeting will be held, the details of which are set out below:

Bun-sgoil Gàidhlig Loch Abar, 27 February 2018 at 6.30pm.

Anyone wishing to attend the public meeting is invited to do so. The meeting will be convened by the Council, will be chaired by a senior elected councillor, and will be addressed by officers of the Care and Learning Service.

The meeting will be an opportunity for the public to hear more about the proposal; to ask questions about the proposal; and to have the views of all stakeholders recorded so that they can be taken into account. A note will be taken at the meeting of questions asked and views expressed. This note will be published on the Council website. The meeting will also be recorded.

The note will be forwarded to Education Scotland, along with other submissions and comments received by the Council during the consultation process.

Meetings with Pupils and Staff

School staff will arrange to discuss the proposal with pupils (who are considered to be of a suitable age and maturity) in the affected schools. A record of questions, responses and views will be taken and this will be published in the Consultation Report.

Responses to the Proposals

Interested parties are invited to respond to the Proposals by making written or electronic submissions on the Proposals to:

Norma Young
Area Care and Learning Manager (West)
Camaghael Hostel
Fort William
PH33 7NE
Email: Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk

Or via an online form, a link to which can be found on

www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

When responding, you are invited to state your relationship with the school – for example, “pupil”, “parent”, “carer”, “relative”, “former pupil”, “teacher in school”, “member of the community” etc. However it is not compulsory to do so.

Those sending in a response, whether by letter or electronically should know that their response will be open to public scrutiny and may have to be supplied to anyone making a reasonable request to see it. If they do not wish their response to be made publicly available, they should clearly write on the document: “I wish my response to be considered as confidential with access restricted to Councillors and Council Officers of Highland Council”. Otherwise, it will be assumed that the person making the response agrees to it being made publicly available. All written responses must be received by the last day of the consultation period, Friday 16 March 2018 at 5.00pm.

Involvement of Education Scotland

When the Proposal Document is published, a copy will also be sent to Education Scotland by the Council. Education Scotland will also be sent, by 16 April 2018, a copy of any relevant written representations that are received by the Council from any person during the consultation period. Education Scotland will also receive the summary note of the public meeting that will be held and so far as is practicable a copy of any other relevant documentation. Education Scotland will then prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal not later than 4 May 2018. In preparing their report, Education Scotland may visit the affected schools and make such enquiries of people there as they consider appropriate.

Review of Consultation Exercise

Highland Council will review the proposal having regard to the Education Scotland Report, written representations that it has received, and oral representations made at the public meeting. It will then prepare a Consultation Report. This Report will be published in electronic and printed formats and will be sent to anyone who submitted a written representation during consultation. It will be available on the Council website as well as at the affected school and local library, free of charge. The Report

will include a summary of the written and oral representations made during consultation and a copy of the Education Scotland Report, together with the Council's considered response to the issues raised. The Report will include details of details of any alleged inaccuracies and/or omissions and how these have been handled. The Consultation Report will be published at least 3 weeks prior to being submitted to the Council's People Committee, who will make a recommendation to the full Highland Council.

In publishing the report the Council will invite any person or party to make further representations to the Committee prior to its meeting. A notice to this effect will also be published on the Highland Council website.

At the present time the Council intends to publish its Report in June 2018, prior to submission to the Council's People Committee on 29 August 2018. However, this timescale may change depending on the nature of issues raised during consultation, and the need to give full consideration to those issues. In the latter event, the Report may not be submitted until a later Committee meeting.

Any proposal approved by the People Committee would require to be confirmed by a subsequent meeting of the full Highland Council.

Note on Corrections

If any inaccuracy or omission is discovered in this Proposal paper, either by the Council or any other person, the Council will determine if relevant information has been omitted or, if the paper contains an inaccuracy. The Council will then take appropriate action, which may include the issue of a correction or the reissuing of the Proposal or the revision of the timescale for the consultation period, if appropriate. In that event, relevant consultees and HMI will be advised.

PROPOSAL

Legislative Background

- 1.1 The proposal is advanced within the context of all applicable legislation. Amongst other duties, education authorities are required to secure adequate and efficient provision of school education (S.1 of the Education Act 1980); to publish or otherwise make available information as to their arrangements for the placing of children in schools under their management (S.28 of the 1980 Act) and to promote and support Gaelic Medium education and learning (S.15 of The Education (Scotland) Act 2016. Statutory Guidance issued by Bòrd na Gàidhlig early in 2017 specifies that local authorities should establish catchment areas for Gàidhlig Medium education. The Guidance goes on to say that a catchment area for GME provision should be an area in which the education authority thinks it is reasonable for pupils wishing to receive GME provision to travel to school, and should have the potential to attract parents to choose GME provision for their children. Catchment areas for GME provision will normally overlay a number of school catchment areas.

Reason for the Proposal

- 2.1 This proposal is being advanced for the following reasons:
- Highland Council has never previously specified catchment areas for GME. This has led to a lack of clarity for parents in respect of entitlement to GME, (see paragraph 2.2 below).
 - Bòrd na Gàidhlig has issued statutory guidance recommending that local authorities create catchment areas for GME.
- 2.2 The current criteria for providing transport to GME in Highland are not particularly well defined, and have evolved over time. The minimum distance and road safety criteria are the same as for English Medium education. The Council currently has an informal arrangement under which transport to GME can be provided “within reasonable travelling distance”. This has been generally interpreted as meaning up to 15 miles, but there are numerous variations.

Informal Consultation

- 3.1 Informal discussions have been held with the Head Teacher and Chair of the Parent Council of Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar, with local elected councillors, the Head Teachers of other local schools, and with Bòrd na Gàidhlig. Questions have been raised regarding points of detail but no opposition has been expressed.

Current and Planned Provision of Gàidhlig Medium Education within the Lochaber ASG

- 4.1 At secondary school level, Lochaber High School offers GME.

4.2 There are 9 primary schools within the ASG, one of which, Roy Bridge Primary, is currently mothballed. Within the ASG, Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar is the only primary school to offer GME.

Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar

5.1 Bun Sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar (Lochaber Gaelic Primary School) is situated in the village of Caol, part of the Greater Fort William urban area. Children from across the Lochaber area attend the school. The roll at present is 78 pupils in P1-7 and 31 pupils in the Sgoil-àraich (Nursery). The school, which opened in August 2015, is a newly built stand-alone Gaelic School - the first of its kind in Lochaber. The school has excellent space, accommodation and facilities for a positive and inclusive education for all. There are four teaching classrooms (with capacity for expansion), a well-equipped gymnasium, an art/music room, a large resource base, a spacious library, a fully equipped nursery (Sgoil-àraich) and an after-school childcare facility. The school also has extensive grounds including a spacious nursery garden and outdoor sports pitch.

Proposed School Catchments for GME

6.1 Of the 9 primary schools within the Lochaber ASG, one is mothballed and another is Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar (BSGL) itself. Five of the remaining 7 primary schools are located within Greater Fort William, whilst Spean Bridge PS is located just over 8 miles away, albeit with a wide catchment area. As specified above, the statutory guidance specifies that a catchment area for GME provision should be an area in which the education authority thinks it is reasonable for pupils wishing to receive GME provision to travel to school, and should have the potential to attract parents to choose GME provision for their children.

6.2 Currently, the 109 pupils attending the primary and nursery classes at the school, have home addresses distributed across school catchments as follows:

Primary School Catchment Area	No. of School Pupils and Nursery Children attending BSGL
Banavie Primary	25
Caol Primary	21
Inverlochy Primary	18
Lundavra Primary	33
Roy Bridge/Spean Bridge Primaries	9
Ardgour Primary	1
Ballachulish Primary	2

6.3 All but 12 of the children attending the school have home addresses within the catchment areas of the 4 non-denominational primary schools located within the Fort William urban area (albeit that 3 of those schools have catchments

extending into more rural areas, and Banavie Primary has an extensive rural hinterland to its catchment).

- 6.4 Taking the criteria of travelling distances and “attractiveness” into account, Highland Council considers that the Spean Bridge Primary catchment should be included within the new GM catchment for Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar.
- 6.5 As Roy Bridge PS is currently mothballed, its catchment area is effectively part of the Spean Bridge catchment. Whatever the future holds for the school itself, the Council proposes to include the catchment area of Roy Bridge within the GM catchment of Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar.
- 6.6 The remaining primary school within the ASG is Invergarry Primary, located around 24 miles from Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar, but with a very wide catchment area. No pupils from the Invergarry PS catchment currently attend Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar, and the travel distances involved will be too long for most primary school pupils. Taking these factors into account, the Council does not propose to include the Invergarry PS catchment within the GM catchment of Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar. Highland Council may be willing to offer funded transport via the existing High School bus, should this ever be requested. Parents would need to arrange to transport their children to the Lochaber High bus. There would be no “right” of access to transport for pupils wishing to attend Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar from within the Invergarry PS catchment.
- 6.7 The position of the Kinlochleven ASG is also mentioned above. There are 5 primary schools within the ASG, and GME is not offered within any of them. Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar represents the nearest provision within the Highland Council area, at the following distances:
- Ballachulish PS – 17.4 miles
Duror PS – 21.4 miles
Glencoe PS – 18.4 miles (but with a wide catchment area extending to Glen Etive, up to 41 miles away)
Kinlochleven PS – 23.8 miles
St. Bride’s PS – 14.6 miles
- 6.8 As St. Bride’s PS is located within the current 15 mile radius for providing transport to GME, it is proposed to include the catchment area of this school within the GM catchment of Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar. Enrolment to St. Bride’s PS for English Medium education will be unaffected.
- 6.9 As highlighted above, it is not proposed to include the catchment areas of the remaining schools within the Kinlochleven ASG within the GM catchment of Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar. It is proposed that any demand for GME from within this area are met by the arrangements set out in the “Introduction” section above.
- 6.10 The catchment area of Duror Primary extends to the local authority boundary between Highland Council and Argyll and Bute Council. The latter Authority

offers GME at Appin Primary School, which is closer to Duror than is Fort William. Over the years several parents from the Duror PS catchment have lodged placing requests for Appin Primary, in order to access GME. It is therefore not anticipated that there will be significant demand for pupils from Duror to attend Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar.

- 6.11 Any identified parental demand for GME from within the Kinlochleven ASG would be assessed in accordance with the Education (Scotland) Act 2016.
- 6.12 Ardgour Primary School is part of the Ardnamurchan ASG. At the primary school stage GME is offered within the ASG at Acharacle Primary School, located around 26 miles from Ardgour Primary. Part of the route is along a single track road with numerous blind bends and summits. Google maps estimates a one way travel time of 48 minutes in normal conditions.
- 6.10 Ardgour Primary is located around 13 miles from Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar, although the route also involves crossing Loch Linnhe via the Corran Ferry. After crossing the Loch, the estimated journey time is around 23 minutes.
- 6.11 Taking all of the above into account, the Council does not propose to include the EM catchment areas of Ardgour Primary within the GM catchment of Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar. It is proposed that any demand for GME from within this area are met by the arrangements set out in the “Introduction” section above.
- 6.12 Maps of the current school catchments for the Lochaber ASG are at **Appendix A**. No changes are proposed for these catchments in respect of English Medium education.
- 6.13 The proposed new GM catchment is shown at **Appendix B**.
- 6.14 For the purposes of GME, the Lochaber High School catchment will be the same as the school’s English Medium catchment, but with the addition of the St. Bride’s PS catchment, in cases where pupils from that catchment had attended Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar. Pupils from the rest of the Kinlochleven ASG and the Ardgour PS catchment will be offered transport on the same basis as for the Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar. They would also have the opportunity to enrol at their catchment secondary school. Ardnamurchan High School currently offers GME, and apart from Gàidhlig itself, offers Geography, History, Modern Studies and RME through the medium of Gaelic.

Educational Benefits

- 7.1 The Proposal forms part of Highland Council’s overall approach to the promotion of Gàidhlig medium education. Up to now, Highland Council’s admission arrangements to GME have been informal and based on a “reasonable distance” (often applied as a 15 mile radius) from each school offering GME. In some locations these radii have overlapped, and the “15

mile” principle has not always been applied consistently. The creation of GM catchment areas, extended throughout Highland, will mean that admissions to GME will in future be more formal and robust.

- 7.2 The Proposal therefore helps to consolidate our existing provision of GME, and allows for the more efficient use of resources. It should be considered alongside other measures being undertaken to promote Gaelic and the benefits of bilingualism.

Effects on School Transport

- 8.1 Within the Lochaber ASG, any current transport to Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar will either utilise existing arrangements or arrangements that serve Lochaber High School. In the latter case, there may be an exception for Friday afternoons, when dedicated transport may have to be provided.
- 8.2 It is possible that in future the Council will receive applications from within the defined catchment that require new transport arrangements. Such instances are expected to be rare.

Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements

- 9.1 There is not expected to be any impact on the schools within the Lochaber ASG, since pupils from most of the ASG are already able to enrol in Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar.
- 9.2 Similarly, the arrangements proposed for the Kinlochleven ASG, and the Ardgour PS catchment, reflect current informal practice. Only a very small number of children currently travel from these areas to Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar.

Effect on the Local Communities

- 10.1 The proposal is not expected to have any impact on the wider local community.

Recommendation

- 11.1 Highland Council recommends the adoption of a Gàidhlig Medium catchment area for Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar, along the lines set out in this paper.
- 11.2 This consultation paper is issued in terms of the authority’s procedures to meet the relevant statutory requirements. Following the consultation period, a report and submissions received will be presented to the People Committee of the Highland Council.