

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to express my concern about the proposed Tain GME catchment area and how this will affect children from Sutherland.

Whilst I'm not necessarily against a catchment area, how can it work when the children from areas of Sutherland previously able to attend now won't be able to if this goes ahead, but they also won't be able to access GME in another catchment area as there isn't one! In reality there will be no option for them at all, and I do know of families from these excluded areas who had hoped to put their child(ren) to GME in Tain.

There is currently no Gaelic Medium Education in Sutherland at all and only Gaelic for Learners S1-S4 in one of the 4 secondary schools, so young people here are severely disadvantaged. This proposed catchment area will now exclude even more of Sutherland that previously could actually access Gaelic.

I also know of a family in the north who had a child in GME in Thurso a few years ago, but they moved further west (no further than some of the children in the proposed catchment area here) but they were refused transport and had to remove their P3 child from GME. Highland Council promised them he could take up Gaelic at secondary level in Farr Primary School, but by the time he'd reached S1 there was no longer Gaelic available there, resulting in him and his two younger siblings never being able to access Gaelic. So it seems that whether there is or isn't a catchment area Sutherland children are suffering.

These might not seem like huge numbers but every child is important. It doesn't feel like anytime since my own children were in GME, but recently they have all been passing on Gaelic to our communities through Gaelic song workshops, Gaelic wreath making and as musicians in a Sutherland Seachdain na Gàidhlig concert. If children here can't access the language then how can it be passed on?

Also, there is virtually no advertising by Highland Council in Sutherland communities that GME could be a possibility in their schools. I really feel Sutherland has been forgotten about.

Please could you confirm receipt of my email.

Kind regards,

Fiona