

Agenda Item	8.
Report No	CLH 76/19

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Care, Learning and Housing

**Date:** 5 December 2019

**Report Title:** Review of the Statutory Consultation Exercise to establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Mount Pleasant Primary School, Thurso

**Report By:** Chief Executive

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Following conclusion of the statutory consultation process, this report and accompanying information sets out a recommendation to establish a Gaelic Medium (GM) catchment area for Mount Pleasant Primary School.
- 1.2 The proposal was advanced in line with statutory guidance issued by Bòrd na Gàidhlig, which recommends that local authorities create catchment areas for Gaelic Medium education (GME). Mount Pleasant Primary School is the only primary school within the Thurso Associated School Group to offer GME. It is proposed to formally create a GM catchment for Mount Pleasant Primary School on the basis of the map shown at Appendix 2.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
  - i. Consider the Proposal set out within the Consultation Report (Appendix 1) and associated appendices;
  - ii. Consider the representations received and the report from Education Scotland (Appendices 4 and 5);
  - iii. Agree to recommend to the Council the creation of a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Mount Pleasant Primary School encompassing the whole of the Thurso Associated School Group, as shown on the map at Appendix B

### **3. Implications**

- 3.1 Resource - The proposal largely formalises arrangements that have previously operated on an informal basis. No additional costs are expected to arise.
- 3.2 Legal - The statutory consultation has been taken forward as per the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – None
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – None
- 3.5 Risk – None
- 3.6 Gaelic - The Proposal will provide clarity to local parents, in respect of entitlement to GME.

### **4. Public Consultation**

- 4.1 **Appendix 1** is the proposal for decision. The original proposal issued for consultation, and relevant appendices for consideration by the Committee are all also circulated as appendices to this Paper. They provide details of all consultation comments received, the note of the public meeting, the report from Education Scotland, and the Council's response to comments arising from the consultation.
- 4.2 The proposal was widely circulated to parents, pupils and others. Only one written response was received during the consultation period, and this was a supportive response from Bòrd na Gàidhlig. The note of the public meeting is at **Appendix 3**. All of the questions raised concerned transport issues, and are addressed in more detail at Section 4 of the report at Appendix 1.

### **5. Report from Education Scotland**

- 5.1 In their report, Education Scotland noted that consultees agreed that it was useful that the proposal detailed some of the transport arrangements for children and young people accessing GME. Should the proposal be implemented, the Council needs to give more detail of the safe transporting of children to and from Mount Pleasant Primary School when starting and finishing times vary from that of Thurso High School. Education Scotland added that, at the present time, stakeholders' confidence is diminished due to the lack of clarity on how progression in GME will be advanced at the secondary stages. Parents requested that effective transition arrangements be put in place to support children's wellbeing and learning as they move from primary to secondary.
- 5.2 Education Scotland concluded the proposal has the potential to result in educational benefits to children attending GME. They added that consultees did have some justifiable concerns, which the council needs to address in its final report. These centre on promotion of GME, transport and taking forward 3-18 GME as a continuum of learning. All of the issues raised by Education Scotland are addressed at Section 6 of Appendix 1.

### **6. Procedure**

- 6.1 The legislation requires that any proposal for decision must be published at least 3 weeks in advance of the meeting at which any decision may be made, to allow time for further

representations. The proposal was published on 11 November 2019. Any further representations that are received will be tabled at the meeting for the attention of Members.

- 6.2 As this report relates to a statutory consultation, any decision taken by this Committee will be considered by the full Highland Council before being implemented.

Designation:	Chief Executive
Date:	6 November 2019
Author:	Ian Jackson, Education Officer
Background Papers:	Review of Consultation Report and appendices; original Proposal Paper and appendices



## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

### CARE AND LEARNING SERVICE

#### REVIEW OF THE PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A GAELIC MEDIUM CATCHMENT AREA FOR MOUNT PLEASANT PRIMARY SCHOOL

This report has been prepared following a review of the proposal to establish a Gaelic Medium (GM) catchment area for Mount Pleasant Primary School.

Having had regard (in particular) to:

- Relevant written representations received by the Council (from any person) during the consultation period.
- Oral representations made to it (by any persons) at the public meeting held at Mount Pleasant Primary School on 25 June 2019.
- The report from Education Scotland.

This document has been issued by the Highland Council under the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

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**Appendix 4** - Report from Education Scotland (English language version)

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**Appendix A** - The proposal document

**Appendix B** - Proposed GM catchment for Mount Pleasant Primary School

## 1.0 Background

1.1 Highland Council's Care, Learning and Housing Committee, at its meeting on 29 May 2019, agreed that a statutory consultation be undertaken on the proposal to establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Mount Pleasant Primary School.

1.2 The Proposal Paper suggested that the new catchment will overlay the current English Medium (EM) catchments of Mount Pleasant Primary School, Miller Academy Primary School, Pennyland Primary School, Castletown Primary School, Crossroads Primary School, Halkirk Primary School, and Reay Primary School. Particular arrangements would apply to school transport from the catchment areas of the schools outwith Thurso.

1.3 The Proposal Paper also suggested formalising the current arrangements relating to Gàidhlig Medium Education (GME) in Thurso High School, under which the catchment area for Thurso High School would apply to both Gàidhlig Medium and English Medium education.

1.4 **Appendix A** is the original consultative paper and provides full details of the above proposal. **Appendix B** is the appendix to the original proposal.

## 2.0 Consultation process

2.1 The formal consultation period ran from Tuesday 4 June 2019 to Friday 22 August 2019. Written representations on the proposal were sought from

interested parties as defined within the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.

2.2 In accordance with statutory requirements, the following were consulted:

- (i) Parents of pupils attending Mount Pleasant Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (ii) Parents of pupils attending Castletown Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (iii) Parents of pupils attending Crossroads Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (iv) Parents of pupils attending Halkirk Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (v) Parents of pupils attending Miller Academy Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (vi) Parents of pupils attending Pennyland Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (vii) Parents of pupils attending Reay Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (viii) The Parent Councils of each of the above schools;
- (ix) All staff of the schools listed above;
- (x) Members of Parliament and Members of the Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal;
- (xi) Trade union representatives;
- (xii) All Community Councils for the areas covered by the Proposal;
- (xiii) Bòrd na Gàidhlig;
- (xiv) Education Scotland;
- (xvii) Highland Youth Convenor

2.3 The proposal document was advertised on the Highland Council website.

2.4 A public meeting was held at Mount Pleasant Primary School on 25 June 2019. The meeting was advertised in advance on the Highland Council website and Facebook page and in the *John O'Groats Journal*.

2.5 Following receipt of written representations received by Highland Council and consideration of oral representations made at the public meeting, officials reviewed the proposals.

2.6 The outcome of this review process is reflected in the response, conclusion and recommendations outlined below.

### 3.0 Responses received

3.1 One written response was received during the formal consultation period, which came from Bòrd na Gàidhlig. A copy is at **Appendix 2**. The Bòrd welcomed the recommendation that a catchment area will be established for Mount Pleasant Primary School where there is GME provision, and noted that the Council has considered both reasonable travel distance and arrangements for pupils and

parents. The Bòrd expressed the view that the proposed catchment area for Thurso Primary School will support the availability and growth of GME.

- 3.2 The note of the public meeting is at **Appendix 3**. All of the questions raised were on future school transport arrangements for pupils accessing GME. These are addressed in Section 4 below.

#### 4.0 Responses to the Issues raised at the Public Meeting

##### Issue 1

If a pupil was attending GME at Mount Pleasant Primary but then moved out of the GM catchment, would they still receive transport?

##### Response 1

See the discussion at Questions 1-4 of the Public Meeting on 25 June 2019 (Appendix 2).

The Highland Council's school transport policy is based on the principle of transport within defined catchment areas. The Council appreciates that in certain geographical areas the situation with GME is different, in that not every part of Highland is within a GME catchment area. Normally, pupils moving out of a school catchment would cease to be entitled to transport to that school, and this would be the default position. However, we propose that if requests of the type described are received, they would be considered if (a) the pupil had moved to a location outwith a GME catchment area or beyond reasonable travelling distance to alternative GME provision, and (b) the travel time and distance to Mount Pleasant school, and cost of provision, were considered reasonable. The Council will draw up guidance regarding how such requests should be assessed, and this will include consideration of how long the pupil has been in GME education and their stage in school. Parents who wish to dispute the assessment may ask for their case to be considered by the Educational Transport Entitlement Review Sub-Committee.

##### Issue 2

The Proposal Paper suggests that transport to GME at Mount Pleasant will be via the High School bus. How will that work when the primary school starts half an hour later than the secondary school each morning, or on Friday afternoons when the High School finishes at lunchtime?

##### Response 2

Transport would normally be provided by a High School bus. Our standard arrangements for school transport are that pupils are dropped at school no more than 20 minutes before the start of the school day and collected no more than 20 minutes after the end of the day (although officers may decide to vary this in particular cases). Running buses to Thurso High School and

then to Mount Pleasant Primary should enable the 20-minute window to be maintained, or a slight extension allowed (of no more than 5 minutes).

It is recognised that in some circumstances this would not be appropriate, for example where there are only one or two GME pupils and they are in the younger years of primary school. Routes will be planned according to the number of eligible pupils wishing to use them.

If practicable, and dependent on the number of pupils eligible for GME transport in any year, pupils may be allocated seats on English Medium primary school transport rather than on High School buses. Such transport might therefore serve two or all three of the Thurso primary schools.

Separate transport arrangements will be required on Friday afternoons, unless the primary school hours were to be changed.

## **5.0 Summary of the issues raised by Education Scotland**

- 5.1 In line with legislative requirements, Education Scotland was invited to submit comments on the Council's proposals. An English language copy of the report from Education Scotland is at **Appendix 4**. A Gaelic language copy of the report from Education Scotland is at **Appendix 5**.
- 5.2 In their report, Education Scotland noted that consultees agreed that it was useful that the proposal detailed some of the transport arrangements for children and young people accessing GME. Should the proposal be implemented, the Council needs to give more detail of the safe transporting of children to and from Mount Pleasant Primary School when starting and finishing times vary from that of Thurso High School. Education Scotland added that, at the present time, stakeholders' confidence is diminished due to the lack of clarity on how progression in GME will be advanced at the secondary stages. Parents requested that effective transition arrangements be put in place to support children's wellbeing and learning as they move from primary to secondary.
- 5.3 Education Scotland concluded the proposal has the potential to result in educational benefits to children attending GME. They added that consultees did have some justifiable concerns, which the council needs to address in its final report. These centre on promotion of GME, transport and taking forward 3-18 GME as a continuum of learning.
- 5.4 The issues raised by Education Scotland are addressed in Section 6 below.

## **6.0 Responses to the Issues raised by Education Scotland**

### **Issue 3**

The Council needs to give more detail of the safe transporting of children to and from Mount Pleasant Primary School when starting and finishing times vary from that of Thurso High School.



**Response 3**

See Response 2 above.

**Issue 4**

Effective transition arrangements should be put in place to support children's wellbeing and learning as they move from primary to secondary.

**Response 4**

Council officials and the local Head Teachers have been working together to provide appropriate staffing arrangements for those GM pupils moving up to Thurso High School from August 2020 onwards. Arrangements will be put in place which will be sustainable in the long term.

**Issue 5**

The educational benefit statement should more strategically capture how a 3-18 GME curriculum strengthens the rationale for drawing up catchment areas. This should fully involve parents and partners and be a shared narrative of how this proposal realises more detailed educational benefits for children and young people learning through Gaelic and English.

**Response 5**

The Proposal Paper advised that the proposal is being advanced because the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Medium Education requires local authorities to set up Gaelic Medium catchment areas.

Nevertheless, the setting up of the catchment areas will strengthen GME in the Thurso area by demonstrating the Council's commitment to providing GME within the Thurso ASG. Evidence of this commitment to the long-term provision of GME will help address drop-off rates and will make Gaelic a key part of choices for life for local children. It is acknowledged that bilingualism has educational benefits as it provides the user with a better sense of the structure of language, and bilingual children often find it easier to pick up other languages. The continued availability of Gaelic medium education in the Thurso ASG, as evidenced by the new catchment, will provide children with the opportunity to develop these skills for life.

**7.0 Effects on the Community**

7.1 The Proposal will not have any impact on the wider community.

**8.0 Effects on School Transport**

8.1 The proposal will clarify travel entitlement for children accessing GME in the Thurso Associated School Group, and provision will be made according to normal criteria.

## **9.0 Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements**

9.1 The proposal is not expected to have any impact on staff and school management arrangements.

## **10.0 Alleged omissions or inaccuracies**

10.1 There were no alleged omissions or inaccuracies.

## **11.0 Overall Review of Consultation Exercise**

11.1 The proposal attracted very little interest. No significant concerns were raised.

11.2 Highland Council has carefully considered all the views expressed in consultation. The Council's responses are set out above, and its conclusion is set out at Section 13 below.

## **12.0 Legal issues**

12.1 Throughout this statutory consultation Highland Council has complied in full with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

## **13.0 Conclusion**

13.1 The consultation process has complied fully with legislative requirements and has provided an opportunity for all parties to identify key issues of concern. These issues have been fully considered and the Council's response detailed in sections 4 and 6 above.

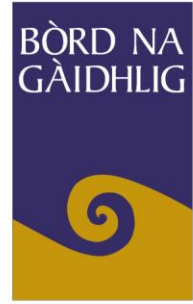
13.2 The Education Scotland Inspector visited Mount Pleasant Primary School and Thurso High School, to speak to parents, pupils and staff and gather a variety of views. Education Scotland also had the opportunity to review in detail the proposal document, all written responses, and the note of the public meeting.

13.3 On reviewing all of the submissions, the note of the meeting, and the Education Scotland report; officials conclude that the Proposal to create a GM catchment area for Mount Pleasant Primary School offers educational benefits and should be implemented. The GM catchment area should be the same as that set out in the Proposal Paper. The reasons for this conclusion are set out above.

## **14.0 Recommendation**

14.1 It is therefore recommended that Highland Council proceeds with the course of action set out at Paragraph 13.3 above.

**Brian Porter**  
**Head of Resources, Care and Learning Service**  
**12 November 2019**



<b>Freagairt Bhòrd na Gàidhlig airson Co-chomhairleachadh air Sgìre-sgoile airson Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig ann an Inbhir Theòrsa aig Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd</b>	<b>Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Response on the Highland Council Consultation on GME Catchment Area for Thurso</b>
<p><b>1. Ro-ràdh</b></p> <p>Tha Bòrd na Gàidhlig a' cur fàilte air an iomairt gus sgìre-sgoile a chur air bhonn airson Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig ann an sgìre Inbhir Theòrsa. Tha am Bòrd ag aithneachadh gu bheil Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd a' gluasad gu sgìrean-sgoile airson FtG a stèidheachadh air feadh sgìre na Comhairle.</p> <p>Tha Am Plana Cànan Nàiseanta Gàidhlig 2018-23 agus an Stiùireadh Reachdail airson Foghlam Gàidhlig mar bhunait airson na freagairt seo. San Stiùireadh Reachdail, far a bheil barrachd mìneachaidh air na ceumannan seo, 's e bunait na cùise gun bu chòir adhartas is fàs a bhith air Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig.</p>	<p><b>1. Introduction</b></p> <p>Bòrd na Gàidhlig welcomes the initiative to establish a school catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in the Thurso area. The Bòrd recognises that Highland Council is moving to the establishment of catchment areas where there is existing GME provision in the Council's area.</p> <p>The Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education and the National Gaelic Language Plan 2018-23 form the basis for the Bòrd's response to this consultation. The Statutory Guidance, where there is further detail on the steps involved, has as its basis that GME should develop and grow.</p>
<p><b>2. Fiosrachadh sa Cho-chomhairleachadh</b></p> <p>Tha Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd ag ràdh gu bheil iad airson sgìre-sgoile a stèidheachadh airson nan adhbharan a leanas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tha an Stiùireadh Reachdail a' moladh gun tèid sin a chur air dòigh;</li> <li>• Tha mì-chinnt ann a thaobh sgìrean-sgoile airson FtG a tha a' ciallachadh nach eil pàrantan cinnteach am faigh iad FtG airson an cuid chloinne; agus</li> <li>• Tha cleachdadh aig a' Chomhairle gum bi iad a' lìbhrigeadh còmh-dhail taobh a-staigh sgìre a tha reusanta agus gu h-àbhaisteach tha seo a' ciallachadh nas lugha de 15 mìltean airson 'turas gu sgoil'.</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. Consultation Information</b></p> <p>The Highland Council says they want to establish a catchment area for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Statutory Guidance recommends that one be developed;</li> <li>• There is lack of clarity for parents about the entitlement to GME for their children; and</li> <li>• The Council has used the practice of providing transport within a reasonable travelling distance and generally this has been understood to mean within 15 miles of the school.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Moladh aig a' Chomhairle</b></p> <p><b>Solar làithreach agus Solar teachdail de dh'fhoghlam tron Ghàidhlig taobh a-staigh ASG Inbhir Theòrsa</b></p>	<p><b>3. Council Recommendation</b></p> <p><b>Current and Planned Provision of Gàidhlig Medium Education within the Thurso ASG</b></p>

<p>Chan eil FtG ri fhaighinn an-dràsta ann an Àrd-sgoil Inbhir Theòrsa. Ri linn sin, tha Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd an dùil FtG a thòiseachadh aig Àrd-sgoil Inbhir Theòrsa san Lùnastal 2020, gus freagairt air a' chiad sgoilearan bho Bhun-sgoil Mount Pleasant a' tòiseachadh AS1.</p> <p>Tha 7 bun-sgoiltean taobh a-staigh an ASG. 'S e Bun-sgoil Mount Pleasant an aon tè a tha a' tabhann FtG aig an ìre seo.</p> <p>Tha Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd a' moladh gun tèid sgìre-sgoile FtG a stèidheachadh airson Bun-sgoil Mount Pleasant a thig tharais air sgìrean-sgoile airson sgoiltean Beurla: Bun-sgoiltean Bhaile a' Chaisteil, Crossroads, Hàcraig, Acadamaidh Mhic a' Mhuilleir r, nam Peighinnean agus Mheadhradh, ach le cuingealachadh air siubhal.</p> <p>Tha am pàipear a' mìneachadh nan àmannaan siubhail agus nam mìltean eadar gach sgoil agus Bun-sgoil Mount Pleasant aig 6.1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bun-sgoil Bhaile a' Chaisteil – Bun-sgoil Mount Pleasant - 5 mìle, àm-siubhail 8 mionaidean.</li> <li>• Bun-sgoil Crossroads – Bun-sgoil Mount Pleasant - 10.2 mìle, àm-siubhail 14 mionaidean.</li> <li>• Bun-sgoil Hàcraig – Bun-sgoil Mount Pleasant - 7.5 mìle, àm-siubhail 13 mionaidean.</li> <li>• Bun-sgoil Acadamaidh Mhic a' Mhuilleir – Bun-sgoil Mount Pleasant - 0.8 mìle, àm-siubhail 3 mionaidean.</li> <li>• Bun-sgoil nam Peighinnean – Bun-sgoil Mount Pleasant - 1.3 mìle, àm-siubhail 4 mionaidean.</li> <li>• Bun-sgoil Hàcraig – Bun-sgoil Mount Pleasant - 11.2 mìle, àm-siubhail 18 mionaidean.</li> </ul> <p>Aig 6.7 tha a' Chomhairle ag ràdh gum feum clann sam bith bho na sgìrean-sgoile aig Baile a' Chaisteil, Crossroads, Hàcraig agus Meadhradh a dhol air a' bhus a tha ann airson sgoilearan na h-àrd-sgoile.</p> <p>6.7 Mar sin, tha a' chomhairle a' moladh gun</p>	<p>GME is currently not offered within Thurso High School. However, Highland Council proposes to introduce GME at Thurso High in August 2020, to coincide with the first Gàidhlig Medium pupils from Mount Pleasant Primary entering S1.</p> <p>There are 7 primary schools within the ASG. Mount Pleasant Primary is the only one to offer GME at the primary stage.</p> <p>The Highland Council recommends that a GMC district be established for Mount Pleasant Primary which will overlay the English Medium catchments of: Castletown, Crossroads, Halkirk, Miller Academy, Pennyland and Reay primaries, but with restrictions on transport.</p> <p>The consultation paper lists the time and distance between each school and Thurso Primary School at 6.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Castletown Primary – Mount Pleasant Primary – 5 miles, 8 minutes travel time.</li> <li>• Crossroads Primary – Mount Pleasant Primary – 10.2 miles, 14 minutes travel time.</li> <li>• Halkirk Primary – Mount Pleasant Primary – 7.5 miles, 13 minutes travel time.</li> <li>• Miller Academy Primary – Mount Pleasant Primary – 0.8 miles, 3 minutes travel time.</li> <li>• Pennyland Primary - Mount Pleasant Primary – 1.3 miles, 4 minutes travel time.</li> <li>• Reay Primary - Mount Pleasant Primary – 11.2 miles, 18 minutes travel time.</li> </ul> <p>At 6.7, the Council clearly states that children from catchment areas of Castletown, Crossroads, Halkirk and Reay must use existing transport which is provided for Thurso High school pupils.</p> <p><i>6.7 The Council therefore proposes that the provision of school transport from the</i></p>
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<p>tèid còmh-dhail sgoile a thoirt seachad bho sgìrean-sgoile Bhaile a' Chaisteil, Crossroads, Hàcraig agus Meadh-rath gu Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig ann am Bun-sgoil Mount Pleasant, a' cleachdadh còmh-dhail sgoile a th' ann gu Àrd-sgoil Inbhir Theòrsa mar-thà. Mar as àbhaist, cha tèid còmh-dhail shònraichte tro thagsaidh no minibus a thoirt seachad.</p>	<p><i>catchment areas of Castletown, Crossroads, Halkirk, and Reay primary schools to GME at Mount Pleasant Primary will be on the basis of utilising the existing transport for Thurso High School. Dedicated transport by taxi or minibus will not normally be provided.</i></p>
<p><b>4. Stiùireadh Reachdail airson Foghlam Gàidhlig</b></p> <p>Tha moladh san Stiùireadh Reachdail airson Foghlam Gàidhlig gun tèid sgìrean-sgoile a stèidheachadh airson sgoiltean far a bheil foghlam tron Ghàidhlig (FtG) (Earrainnean 2.53 is 2.54).</p> <p><b>Sgìrean-sgoile FtG is Stiùireadh airson Àiteachan a Ghleidheadh do Sgoilearan</b></p> <p>Bu chòir do dh'ùghdarrasan foghlaim sgìrean-sgoile a stèidheachadh airson FtG, agus dh'fhaodadh gum bi iad ag iarraidh beachdachadh air an iarrtas a th' ann airson FtG nuair a tha iad a' stèidheachadh stiùireadh airson nan àiteachan a thèid a ghleidheadh do sgoilearan ann am FtG.</p> <p><b>Tha 2.54 ag ainmeachadh:</b></p> <p>Bu chòir do sgìre-sgoile airson sgoile le FtG a bhith na sgìre far a bheil an t-ùghdarras foghlaim den bheachd gu bheil e reusanta do chloinn san sgìre sin, a tha airson a dhol gu FtG, siubhal don sgoil, agus bu chòir san sgìre sin gum bi cothrom ann pàrantan a thàladh gu bhith cur an cuid chloinne gu FtG.</p> <p>Mar sin, tha Bòrd na Gàidhlig a' cur fàilte air a' mholadh gun tèid Sgìre-sgoile a stèidheachadh airson Bun-sgoil Mount Pleasant far a bheil FtG ri fhaighinn. Tha an t-ùghdarras foghlaim air beachdachadh air an dà chuid astar agus dòigh siubhal reusanta do sgoilearan agus pàrantan.</p>	<p><b>4. Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education</b></p> <p>The Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education recommends that catchment areas are established for schools where Gaelic-medium education (GME) is provided (Section 2.53 &amp; 2.54).</p> <p><b>GME Catchment Areas and Placing Guidelines</b></p> <p>Education authorities should establish catchment areas for GME provision and may wish to consider demand for GME when setting guidelines for placing pupils in GME provision.</p> <p><b>2.54 states:</b></p> <p>A catchment area of 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.</p> <p>Therefore, Bòrd na Gàidhlig welcomes the recommendation that a catchment area will be established for Mount Pleasant Primary School where there is GME provision. The education authority has considered both reasonable travel distance &amp; arrangements for pupils and parents.</p>
<p><b>5. Am Plana Cànan Nàiseanta Gàidhlig 2018-23</b></p> <p>'S e fear de na trì prìomhachasan sa Phlana Cànan Nàiseanta Gàidhlig 2018-23 gun tèid fàs</p>	<p><b>5. The National Gaelic Language Plan 2018-23</b></p> <p>One of the three priorities within National Gaelic Language Plan 2018-23 is to increase the</p>

a thoirt air ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig agus tha FtG air a chomharrachadh mar chuspair airson fàs. Ann am beachd a' Bhùird, cuiridh am moladh aig Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd ri cothroman gus FtG fhaighinn no fàs ann am FtG.

Tha am Bòrd cuideachd a' cur fàilte air a mholadh bho Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd gu bheil iad an dùil FtG a' stèidheachadh ann an Àrd-sgoil Inbhir Theòrsa bho Lùnastal 2020. Nì seo cinnteach gu bheil leantainneach ann am FtG ri fhaighinn san sgìre.

learning of Gaelic and GME is highlighted as an area for growth. In the Bòrd's view the proposed catchment area for Thurso Primary School will support the availability and growth of GME.

The Bòrd also welcomes the proposal from Highland Council that GME will be available in Thurso High School from August 2020. This will ensure that continuity of GME is available in the area.

**MINUTE OF PUBLIC MEETING HELD AT MOUNT PLEASANT PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
**25 JUNE 2019**

**CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO CREATE A GAELIC MEDIUM CATCHMENT AREA FOR MOUNT PLEASANT PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Panel**

Raymond Bremner, Councillor (Chair)  
Norma Young, Area Care and Learning Manager (West)  
Ian Jackson, Education Officer, Highland Council  
Dolina Grant, Gaelic Community Learning and Development Officer

Apologies: Jacquelyn Jennett, Area Care and Learning Manager (North)

19 members of the public attended the meeting, plus Cllr. W. MacKay (Ward 3), Suzanne Urquhart (Head Teacher of Mount Pleasant Primary School), Joanne McHale (Bòrd na Gàidhlig) and another member of the school staff.

**The Chairperson** began by welcoming everyone to the meeting, by introducing himself and the officials present. He commented that there were a few things to get through during tonight's meeting. The meeting had originally been called to discuss the proposed creation of a Gaelic Medium (GM) catchment area for Mount Pleasant, but he also wanted to set some serious time aside for certain other pressing matters that had arisen in the meantime. He proposed to deal with the catchment area issue first before moving onto more general issues around Gaelic Medium education (GME) in the local area. Copies of the Proposal Paper and appendices were distributed. The Proposal Paper has been issued as a result of statutory guidance issued by Bòrd na Gàidhlig (BnaG). The Chairperson then asked Ian Jackson to describe the consultation process.

**Ian Jackson** advised that, as indicated by the Chairperson, the Council is required to introduce GM catchment areas under the terms of Statutory Guidance issued by BnaG. The setting up of a catchment area involves a statutory consultation, of which this meeting was part. We were in the initial phase of that consultation, which was due to end on 30 August 2019. The purpose of tonight's meeting is to gather views, and we would try to answer any questions that are raised. Any questions that cannot be answered tonight, and which require further research, will be responded to in due course. There is a very clear obligation on the Council to consider each and every one of the comments received, including those made at the meeting tonight.

The formal process has a number of stages and gives ample opportunity for views to be expressed to the Council before any final decision is made. Once the public consultation ends on 30 August, Education Scotland becomes involved. They will

look at the Proposal Paper, the note of the meeting tonight, and any written representations, and will form a view on the educational benefits of the proposal. Education Scotland will visit Mount Pleasant Primary in the autumn, and they will be keen to meet with any parents who wish to make their views known. The Council has to take account of Education Scotland's view on the educational benefits and respond to any points raised by their report, as well as any representations received as a result of the consultation process. Following the completion of that stage, the Council will take a Final Report to the Care, Learning and Housing Committee of the Council. As part of the inclusive process, the Final Report will be published at least 3 weeks before it is submitted to Committee, and anyone who responded in writing to the initial consultation will be invited to make "further representations" during those 3 weeks. Any further representations that are made are submitted to the members of the Committee, either in advance or tabled on the day, so that members are fully informed of any issues that may have arisen. Members will also see copies of the original responses and the note of this meeting. After considering the outcome of consultation, members will then create a catchment, either as set out in this proposal, or in an amended form.

**The Chairperson** then asked Norma Young to explain the educational aspects of the proposal.

**Norma Young** commented that, before she addressed the proposal set out in the paper, she was aware that there were a number of other issues, particularly in relation to staffing, that parents wanted to bring to the Council. She was aware parents had written to the Chief Executive and others, and would be very happy to take question on these matters at the end.

Norma continued by commenting that some people might wonder why we were creating a catchment area when these other matters were outstanding. As Ian had alluded to earlier, it was a requirement of statutory guidance issued by BnaG. Council staff had been going round the Highlands on a rolling programme of creating GM catchments.

The Proposal Paper sets out how Highland Council is seeking to make GME as accessible for as many parents as possible in the Thurso area. One of the key features is providing clarity on entitlement to transport to GME. The educational benefits around the Proposal are set out in paragraphs 7.1 and 7.2, and we consider that the Proposal will help consolidate the existing GME provision. The clarification around transport will assist the Head Teacher in advising parents who are considering enrolling in GME.

**The Chairperson** then opened the meeting to the Q and A session.

**Q1** – In the past, we have had someone who was enrolled in GME at Mount Pleasant and who moved to Strathy. When they moved they were promised that they could continue to get transport to GME but after the move took place that



promise was not kept. If we have another case of a pupil who is enrolled in GME but who moves 20/30 miles away, would they be given transport?

**A1 (Ian Jackson)** – One of the advantages of this Proposal is that it will provide clarity with respect to transport. The Highland Council works on the basis of providing school transport to the catchment school for a particular address. In most cases that is the local English Medium school, but it follows that if a pupil is within a designated Gaelic Medium catchment, they will get transport. The Paper before you proposes that the GM catchment for Mount Pleasant will be the whole of the Thurso ASG, so children living within that area will get transport. The Paper does mention that if a pupil is coming from a considerable distance, we will try to make use of existing transport to Thurso High, and that is to prevent the Council incurring unreasonable expense in relation to GM transport. These cases would be judged on a case by case basis, as it may not be appropriate to place a single P1 pupil on a High School bus, whereas as the child moved up through primary they may become ready to travel on the High School bus. The intention is though, that once we define this catchment, that if you are within the new catchment and you want to access GME at Mount Pleasant, then you will get transport.

**The Chairperson** commented that the response did not answer the question. The question posed was in relation to someone from outside the Thurso HS area (e.g. in Strathy). Could consideration be given to providing transport in a case where someone was accessing GME from within the Thurso ASG, but then moved just outside of that area. In the case mentioned GME had been invested in the children, but then they moved outside the catchment and even though a promise was given it was not adhered to.

**A1 (Ian Jackson)** – Excuse my ignorance of the local geography. I knew Strathy was somewhere to the west of Thurso but I hadn't realised it was outside the Thurso HS catchment. In Highland school transport is based on the principle of the school catchment. Normally, if someone chooses to move out of catchment, then they don't get school transport to their old school. They would get transport to the new school, assuming they met the distance criterion. It's a little different with GME, I will admit, because in the scenario you describe, the family moved to an area that doesn't offer GME. We would have to consider each case on its merits, but I couldn't guarantee that a family who moved out of catchment would continue to receive transport, because the system is based around the idea of catchments, and in the scenario you outline the Council would have to take the potential costs into account.

**(Norma Young)** – I appreciate the argument that in this scenario considerable resource had been invested on providing GME for the child. I think the way to address this would be to write into the Paper that any such case would be considered by the Transport Appeals Committee. It should not be for a single officer to decide on such a matter. You mention that a promise was made to the family. I didn't know who that person was, but it sounds to me that whoever they were, they

didn't actually have the delegated authority to take that decision, and therefore it wasn't followed through. If it was written in that such cases would be referred to the Transport Appeals Committee, that would be the course of action that would cover another similar such case.

**Q2** – Could that not have been advised to the family at the time?

**A2 (Norma Young)** – I don't know about this particular case, when did it happen?

**Q3 (follow-up)** – Three years ago.

**A2 (Norma Young)** – So that's why I think we need to future-proof our policy.

**The Chairperson** commented that he knew of the case, and suggested that the family appealed at the time, but the Transport Appeals Committee did not uphold their appeal. He suggested that, because this is a consultation, officers will have to consider the point being raised. We now have the ability to look back on our experience with the GM arrangements at Mount Pleasant and say, "that didn't work, we need to change it". The money that was invested in that family, and the outcomes that investment would have had, should have been taken on board, and those factors need to be set out that out in this consultation exercise.

**(Norma Young)** – One of the things we may need to write in is the nature of the advice we provide to the Transport Appeals Committee, to ensure they are aware that appeals around GME are not on the same basis as other appeals, and that the Committee needs to consider the effect on children's education, in respect of GME.

**The Chairperson** commented that that there would be advantages in considering this as a result of a formal consultation exercise. That would allow us to write something into the rules of the Appeals Committee, which had been endorsed by the Care, Learning and Housing (CLH) Committee.

**Q4 – Cllr. W. MacKay (from the floor)** – I've been a member of the Transport Appeals Committee for 10 years, and I've yet to see a case from this area. I don't think this did go the Appeals Committee.

**The Chairperson** asked Cllr. MacKay whether the Transport Appeals Committee operated to guidelines that were regularly updated, in the manner that was suggested earlier.

**Cllr. MacKay** commented that everyone was given a fair hearing at an Appeals Committee

**The Chairperson** added that anyone could feed into the consultation process, so the very family that was mentioned could contribute a response to the consultation.

**Ian Jackson** commented that the family would not have been directly notified, as letters had been issued to the parents at Mount Pleasant Primary. However, the

consultation papers were available on the schools consultation page on the HC website. Anyone could go to that page and see this and other school consultations. An email address was provided for responses to be sent to, and there was also an online form for the submission of comments.

**Q5** – I'm not sure using the High School bus will work for taking pupils to the primary school, because there is a time difference.

**A5 (Ian Jackson)** – What is the time difference?

**Q6 (follow-up)** – 8.30am at the Thurso High and 9.00am at the primary school. There's also the half-day issue on the Friday.

**A6 (Ian Jackson)** – OK, so quite a big difference then. The half day at the High School on Fridays is one we had previously thought about. The logistics of school transport is something that is dealt with by another department within the Council – by Community Services who cover roads and transport issues. The Care and Learning Service specifies that we need x number of children to be delivered to and collected from certain locations at certain times. There might be some allowances around that. For example they might deliver to the High School at 8.25am and then to Mount Pleasant for 8.40am. I'm not saying that's how it would work but these are the things our colleagues would look at. Where there's a substantial time difference, such as on a Friday afternoon, we would probably have to look at a different arrangement. The Transport Unit would look at the most cost-effective way of delivering transport that is also reasonable. It's difficult to say in any individual case how transport would be organised, but those are the sorts of factors that would be considered.

**The Chairperson** suggested that the solution of the primary school children sharing transport with high school children might not therefore be applied in every case.

**Ian Jackson** commented that each case would be judged on its own merits, but that the Council would try to keep down costs.

**The Chairperson** commented that Care and Learning staff would need to speak to Community Services to ensure that the points being raised tonight as part of consultation were covered in the response.

**Norma Young** commented that the key words were “cost-effectiveness” but also “reasonable”.

There being no other comments on the Proposal Paper, the **Chairperson** reminded those present of the closing date for responses – 30 August 2019 – and of where responses should be sent, either via letter or via email, or by using the online form. A record of this meeting would be made available at least 3 weeks before the

meeting of the Care, Learning and Housing Committee that considered the results of consultation. The members of the Committee would have a chance to see the note and all other representations before the meeting. Following the decision of the Committee, the minutes would be submitted to the full Council for ratification.

MEETING CLOSED.

# **Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010**

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The Highland Council to:**

- **establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Mount Pleasant Primary School. This catchment area will overlay the current English Medium catchment areas for Mount Pleasant Primary School, Miller Academy Primary School, Pennyland Primary School, Castletown Primary School, Crossroads Primary School, Halkirk Primary School and Reay Primary School. Particular arrangements will apply for transport to and from Thurso for the catchment areas of the latter four primary schools; and**
- **in anticipation of establishing Gaelic Medium Education in Thurso High School from 2020-21 onwards, to recognise that the catchment area for Thurso High School will apply to both Gaelic and English Medium Education from August 2020 onwards.**

September 2019

## 1. Introduction

**1.1** This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of The Highland Council's proposal to establish a catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education (GME) for Mount Pleasant Primary School. In preparation for children progressing to Thurso High School, the catchment area for Thurso High School will apply to Gaelic and English Medium Education from August 2020 onwards. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision.

**1.2** HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the schools; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people in the council area;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

**1.3** In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others;
- consideration of further information on all schools affected; and
- visits to Mount Pleasant Primary School and Thurso High School to discuss the proposal with relevant consultees across the proposed catchment areas.

## 2. Consultation process

**2.1** The Highland Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

**2.2** The consultation process ran from 4 June 2019 to 30 August 2019. During that time, the council held a public meeting at Mount Pleasant Primary School. The meeting was attended by 19 members of the public, as well as members of the council and a representative from Bòrd na Gàidhlig. Announcements were placed in the local press and on the council's online services. Statutory consultees, including parents/carers, children, staff and Bòrd na Gàidhlig were informed of the consultation. The council published documentation for the consultation on its website. They also distributed papers to a full range of stakeholders and interested parties.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

**3.1** The Highland Council is proposing to establish catchment areas for GME to comply with legislation. Almost all consultees, including Bòrd na Gàidhlig, were supportive of the proposal. They recognised that with some further work, the proposal will clarify how GME is obtained within Thurso High School's Associated School Group.

**3.2** The council's statement of educational benefits references the advantages of bilingualism and fluency in Gaelic. A number of consultees felt that more children and young people would benefit from this proposal through better promotion of GME.

**3.3** Consultees agreed that it was useful that the proposal detailed some of the transport arrangements for children and young people accessing GME. Should the proposal be implemented, the council needs to give more detail of the safe transporting of children to and from Mount Pleasant Primary School when starting and finishing times vary from that of Thurso High School.

**3.4** Consultees were proud of the fluency in Gaelic that the children in GME at Mount Pleasant Primary School were acquiring. At this stage, stakeholders' confidence is diminished due to the lack of clarity on how progression in GME will be advanced at the secondary stages. Parents also requested that effective transition arrangements be put in place to support children's wellbeing and learning as they move from primary to secondary. Going forward, the educational benefit statement should more strategically capture how a 3-18 GME curriculum strengthens the rationale for drawing up catchment areas. This should fully involve parents and partners, and be a shared narrative of how this proposal realises more detailed educational benefits for children and young people learning through Gaelic and English.

### 4. Summary

Overall, the council's proposal has potential to result in educational benefits for GME. Consultees do have some justifiable concerns, which the council needs to address in its final report. These centre on promotion of GME, transport and taking forward 3-18 GME as a continuum of learning.

**HM Inspectors  
September 2019**

## Achd Sgoiltean (Co-chomhairleachadh) (Alba) 2010

Aithisg le Foghlam Alba a' dèiligeadh ri taobhan foghlaim a' mholaidh le Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd:

- sgìre-sgoile Foghlam tro Mheadhan na Gàidhlig a shuidheachadh airson Bun-sgoil Mount Pleasant. Bidh an sgìre-sgoile seo a' gabhail a-steach nan sgìrean-sgoile a tha ann an-dràsta airson Foghlam Meadhan Beurla airson Bun-sgoil Mount Pleasant, Bun-sgoil Acadamaidh Miller, Bun-sgoil Pennyland, Bun-sgoil Castletown, Bun-sgoil Crossroads, Bun-sgoil Halkirk agus Bun-sgoil Reay. Bidh ullachaidhean sònraichte air an cur air chois airson còmh-dhail gu agus bho Inbhir Theòrsa airson sgìrean-sgoile nan ceithir bun-sgoiltean mu dheireadh; agus
- le sùil ri bhith a' stèidheachadh Foghlam tro Mheadhan na Gàidhlig ann an Àrd-sgoil Inbhir Theòrsa bho 2020-21, aithneachadh gum bi an sgìre-sgoile airson Àrd-sgoil Inbhir Theòrsa air a cur air chois airson Foghlam Meadhan na Gàidhlig agus na Beurla bhon Lùnastal 2020.

An t-Sultain 2019



# 1. Ro-ràdh

**1.1** Chaidh an aithisg seo bho Foghlam Alba ullachadh le Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh a rèir cumhachan Achd Sgoiltean (Co-chomhairleachadh) (Alba) 2010 (“Achd 2010”). Is e adhbhar na h-aithisg beachd neo-eisimeileach agus neo-phàirteach a thabhann mu mholadh Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd sgìre-sgoile a shuidheachadh airson Foghlam Meadhan Gàidhlig (FMG) aig Bun-sgoil Mount Pleasant. Ann a bhith ag ullachadh airson clann a bhith a’ dol air adhart gu Àrd-sgoil Inbhir Theòrsa, bidh sgìre-sgoile Àrd-sgoil Inbhir Theòrsa a’ buntainn ri FMG agus tro mheadhan na Beurla bhon Lùnastal 2020 agus on sin air adhart. Tha Earrann 2 den aithisg a’ cur an cèill geàrr-fhiosrachadh mun phròiseas co-chomhairleachaidh. Tha Earrann 3 den aithisg a’ cur an cèill beachdachadh Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh air taobhan an fhoghlaim den mholadh, a’ gabhail a-steach beachdan cudromach a chuireadh an cèill le luchd-comhairleachaidh. Tha Earrann 4 a’ toirt geàrr-iomradh air beachd an Luchd-sgrùdaidh san fharsaingeachd mun mholadh. An uair a gheibhear an aithisg seo, tha an Achd a’ cur riathanas air a’ chomhairle beachdachadh oirre agus an uair sin an aithisg co-chomhairleachaidh dheireannaich aige ullachadh. Bu chòir don aithisg co-chomhairleachaidh dheireannaich aig a’ chomhairle an aithisg seo a ghabhail a-steach agus mìneachadh a bhith ann den dòigh, ann a bhith a’ tighinn gu co-dhùnadh mun mholadh, a tha e air lèirmheas a dhèanamh air a’ mholadh a bha ann o thùs, a’ gabhail a-steach geàrr-chunntas air na puingeann a chaidh a thogail tron phròiseas co-chomhairleachaidh agus am freagairt a thug a’ chomhairle dhaibh. Feumaidh a’ chomhairle aithisg co-chomhairleachaidh dheireannach fhoillseachadh trì seachdainean mus tig e chun a’ cho-dhùnaidh dheireannaich.

**1.2** Bheachdaidh Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh air:

- a’ bhuidhe a dh’fhaodadh a bhith aig a’ mholadh air clann agus daoine òga sna sgoiltean; luchd-cleachdaidh sam bith eile; clann a dh’fhaodadh a bhith nan sgoilearan taobh a-staigh dà bhliadhna bho cheann-latha foillseachaidh a’ phàipeir molaidh; agus clann agus daoine òga eile ann an sgìre na comhairle;
- buaidhean sam bith eile a dh’fhaodadh a bhith aig a’ mholadh;
- mar a tha a’ chomhairle am beachd droch bhuidhean sam bith a dh’fhaodadh èiridh bhon mholadh a lùghdachadh no sheachnadh; agus
- na buannachdan foghlaim a tha a’ chomhairle a’ creidsinn a thig mar thoradh air a bhith a’ cur a’ mholaidh an sàs, agus adhbharan na comhairle airson a bhith a’ tighinn gu na beachdan sin.

**1.3** Ann a bhith ag ullachadh na h-aithisg seo, ghabh Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh os làimh na gnìomhan a leanas:

- beachdachadh air gach obair-pàipeir buntainneach air a thoirt seachad leis a’ chomhairle a thaobh a’ mholaidh, gu sònraichte an aithris mu na buannachdan foghlaim agus na sgrìobhainnean co-chomhairleachaidh co-cheangailte ri seo, tagraidhean sgrìobhte agus air an labhairt bho phàrantan agus feadhainn eile;
- beachdachadh air tuilleadh fiosrachaidh mu gach sgoil air a bheil seo a’ toirt buaidh; agus

- cuairtean gu Bun-sgoil Mount Pleasant agus Àrd-sgoil Inbhir Theòrsa gus bruidhinn mu dheidhinn a' mholaidh ri co-chomhairlichean iomchaidh thar nan sgìrean-sgoile a thathar a' moladh.

## 2. Am pròiseas co-chomhairleachaidh

**2.1** Ghabh Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd os làimh a' cho-chomhairleachadh air a mholadh (mholaidhean) a thaobh [Achd Sgoiltean \(Co-chomhairleachadh\) \(Alba\) 2010](#).

**2.2** Bha am pròiseas co-chomhairleachaidh a' ruith bho 4 Ògmhios 2019 gu 30 Lùnastal 2019. Rè an ama sin, chùm a' chomhairle coinneamh phoblach aig Bun-sgoil Mount Pleasant. Bha 19 ball den phoball an làthair, cho math ri buill bhon chomhairle agus riochdaire bho Bhòrd na Gàidhlig. Bha fiosrachadh sna pàipearan ionadail agus air seirbheisean air-loidhne na comhairle. Chaidh innse do luchd-co-chomhairleachaidh reachdail, a' gabhail a-steach pàrantan/luchd-cùraim, clann, luchd-obrach agus Bòrd na Gàidhlig mun cho-chomhairleachadh. Dh'fhoillsich a' chomhairle pàipearan mun cho-chomhairleachadh air a làrach-lìn. Sgaoil iad cuideachd pàipearan gu làn raon de luchd-ùidh agus feadhainn aig an robh ùidh sa chùis.

## 3. Taobhan foghlaim a' mholaidh

**3.1** Tha Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd a' moladh sgìrean-sgoile a shuidheachadh airson FMG gus a bhith a rèir an reachdais. Cha mhòr nach robh an luchd-co-chomhairleachaidh air fad, a' gabhail a-steach Bòrd na Gàidhlig, taiceil dhan mholadh. Bha iad ag aithneachadh nam biodh beagan a bharrachd obair air a dhèanamh, gun soilleiricheadh am moladh mar a tha FMG ri fhaotainn taobh a-staigh Buidheann Com-pàirteachaidh na Sgoile aig Àrd-sgoil Inbhir Theòrsa.

**3.2** Tha aithris na comhairle mu na buannachdan foghlaim a' toirt cunntas air na buannachdan a tha an cois dà-chànanas agus fileantas sa Ghàidhlig. Bha grunnan den luchd-co-chomhairleachaidh a' faireachdainn gum faigheadh barrachd chloinne agus daoine òga buannachd bhon mholadh seo tro adhartachadh na b' fheàrr air FMG.

**3.3** Bha luchd-co-chomhairleachaidh ag aontachadh gun robh e feumail gun robh am moladh a' toirt mion-fhiosrachadh mu chuid de na h-ullachaidhean còmhdaile do chlann agus daoine òga a bha a' dol tro FMG. Nan deigheadh am moladh a chur an sàs, dh'fheumadh a' chomhairle barrachd fiosrachaidh a thoirt mu bhith a' giùlain chloinne gu sàbhailte gu agus bho Bun-sgoil Mount Pleasant an uair a tha na h-uairean tòiseachaidh agus crìochnachaidh eadar-dhealaichte bho uairean Àrd-sgoil Inbhir Theòrsa.

**3.4** Bha uair aig an luchd-co-chomhairleachaidh san fhileantas sa Ghàidhlig a bha aig a' chloinn ann am FMG aig Bun-sgoil Mount Pleasant. Aig an ìre seo, tha misneachd luchd-ùidh air lùghdachadh leis an dith soilleireachaidh a tha ann mun dòigh a bhios adhartas ann am FMG air a thoirt air adhart aig ìrean na h-àrd-sgoile. Dh'iarr pàrantan cuideachd gum biodh ullachaidhean gluasaid èifeachdach air an cur nan àite gus taic a thoirt do shunnd agus ionnsachadh na cloinne an uair a bhiodh iad a' gluasad bhon bhun-sgoil chun na h-àrd-sgoile. Ann a bhith a' dol air adhart, bu chòir don aithris buannachd foghlaim glacadh ann an dòigh nas ro-innleachdail mar a tha curraicealam FMG 3-18 a' neartachadh na feallsanachd airson a bhith a' deilbh sgìrean-sgoile. Bu chòir do phàrantan agus com-pàirtichean a bhith an làn sàs ann an seo, agus a bhith na dhòigh-aithris cho-roinnte mun dòigh sa bheil am moladh seo a' gabhail a-steach buannachdan foghlaim nas mionaidich airson clann agus daoine òga ag ionnsachadh tron Ghàidhlig agus Beurla.

## 4. Geàrr-iomradh

San fharsaingeachd, tha comas aig moladh na comhairle a thighinn gu bhith na bhuannachd foghlaim do FMG. Tha fìor uallachaidhean aig luchd-co-chomhairleachaidh, ris am feum a' chomhairle dèiligeadh na aithisg dheireannach. Tha iad sin a' cuimseachadh air FMG adhartachadh, còmhhdail agus a' toirt air adhart FMG 3-18 mar leantaileachd ionnsachaidh.

**Luchd-sgrùdaidh na Banrigh  
An t-Sultain 2019**

## **THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**

**The proposal is to establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Mount Pleasant Primary School, Thurso**

### **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 Gàidhlig Medium (GM) catchment area for Mount Pleasant Primary School. The new catchment will overlay the current English Medium (EM) catchments of Mount Pleasant Primary School, Miller Academy Primary School, Pennyland Primary School, Castletown Primary School, Crossroads Primary School, Halkirk Primary School, and Reay Primary School. Particular arrangements will apply for transport to Thurso from the latter four catchment areas
- In anticipation of the creation of Gàidhlig Medium Education (GME) in Thurso High School from 2020-21 onwards, to recognise that the catchment area for Thurso High School will apply to both Gàidhlig Medium and English Medium education from August 2020 onwards.

Existing primary school catchments for the provision of English Medium education will be unaffected.

Highland Council is making this Proposal to comply with Statutory Guidance issued by Bòrd na Gàidhlig under Section 9 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. Part 1 of the Statutory Guidance specifically relates to the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 and the duty placed on education authorities to promote and support Gaelic education. The Guidance includes a specific requirement on local authorities to create GM catchment areas for schools that offer GME.

The proposed changes, if approved, will be implemented at the conclusion of the statutory consultation process.

If implemented as drafted, the proposed GM catchment for Thurso High School will include all of the primary school catchments within the Thurso Associated School Group (ASG).

Any identified parental demand for future local provision of GME from within any of the primary schools identified above, 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:

- Mount Pleasant Primary School
- Castletown Primary School
- Crossroads Primary School
- Halkirk Primary School
- Miller Academy Primary School
- Pennyland Primary School
- Reay Primary School
- Thurso Public Library

and published on the Highland Council website:

[www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations](http://www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations)

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

Business Support Team  
Caithness House  
Market Place  
Wick  
KW1 4AB  
E-mail: [Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk](mailto: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, Caithness House, Market Place, Wick, KW1 4AB

E-mail: [Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk)

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 Mount Pleasant Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (ii) Parents of pupils attending Castletown Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (iii) Parents of pupils attending Crossroads Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (iv) Parents of pupils attending Halkirk Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;

- (v) Parents of pupils attending Miller Academy Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (vi) Parents of pupils attending Pennyland Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (vii) Parents of pupils attending Reay Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (viii) The Parent Councils of each of the above schools;
- (ix) All staff of the schools listed above.
- (x) Members of Parliament and Members of the Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal;
- (xi) Trade union representatives;
- (xii) All Community Councils for the areas covered by the Proposal;
- (xiii) Bòrd na Gàidhlig;
- (xiv) Education Scotland;
- (xvii) Highland Youth Convenor

### **Advertisement in Local Media**

A notice announcing the public meeting will be placed in the *John O'Groats Journal* and on the Highland Council's website and Facebook page.

### **Consultation Period**

The consultation for this Proposal will run from 4 June 2019 and will end on 30 August 2019. 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:

Mount Pleasant Primary School, 25 June 2019 at 7.30pm.

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:

Jacquelyn Jennett  
Area Care and Learning Manager (North)  
Council Offices  
Drummuie  
Golspie  
KW10 6TA  
Email: [Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk)

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

[www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations](http://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, 30 August 2019 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 9 September 2019, 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 27 September 2019. 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 Care, Learning and Housing 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 December 2019 prior to submission to the Council's Care, Learning and Housing Committee in March 2020. 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 Care, Learning and Housing 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, and the Council must comply with this Guidance. 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 will normally overlay a number of school catchment areas.
- 1.2 In common with all public bodies in Scotland, the Highland Council also has a duty to provide Best Value. This includes making arrangements to secure continuous improvement in performance whilst maintaining an appropriate balance between quality and cost; and, in making those arrangements and securing that balance, to have regard to economy, efficiency, effectiveness, equal opportunities requirements and to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

### Reason for the Proposal

- 2.1 This proposal is being advanced for the following reasons:
  - Bòrd na Gàidhlig has issued statutory guidance recommending that local authorities create catchment areas for GME.
  - Highland Council has not previously specified catchment areas for many of its schools offering GME. This has led to a lack of clarity for parents in respect of entitlement to GME (see paragraph 2.2 below).
- 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 local elected councillors, with staff of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and with the Head Teacher of Mount Pleasant Primary School, Miller Academy Primary School, Pennyland Primary School, Castletown Primary School, Crossroads Primary School, Halkirk Primary School, and Reay Primary School. Contact was also made with the Parent Councils of each of the above schools, and with all the local Community Councils. An explanation of the Proposal was provided and comments were invited. None of the Parent Councils or Community Councils responded in detail at this stage.

### **Current and Planned Provision of Gàidhlig Medium Education within the Thurso ASG**

- 4.1 GME is currently not offered within Thurso High School. However, Highland Council proposes to introduce GME at Thurso High in August 2020, to coincide with the first Gàidhlig Medium pupils from Mount Pleasant Primary entering S1.
- 4.2 There are 7 primary schools within the ASG. Mount Pleasant Primary is the only one to offer GME at the primary stage.

### **Mount Pleasant Primary School**

- 5.1 Mount Pleasant Primary one of three primary schools located within the town of Thurso. Presently the school has 195 pupils across P1-7 in English Medium classes and 20 pupils in Gàidhlig Medium classes. There are also 44 children in the English medium nursery and 9 in Sgoil-àraich (Gàidhlig Medium pre-school nursery).
- 5.2 All of the current pupils within the Gàidhlig Medium classes live within the town of Thurso or its immediate surrounds. Of the 20 GM pupils at present, 10 are from within the Miller Academy Primary catchment, 5 are from the Pennyland Primary catchment, and 5 are from the Mount Pleasant PS catchment itself.
- 5.2 Gàidhlig Medium education was first established at Mount Pleasant Primary in 2013 and was extended to nursery age pupils in 2015.
- 5.3 The school has good-sized classrooms, a large assembly hall with stage, a gymnasium, a library and a music room. Within the main building there is also a Nursery and an Enhanced Provision Unit. A separate building within the grounds houses Sgoil-àraich, the Gaelic Medium Nursery. There is a generous tarmac area around the school and a large grass area with two junior size football pitches. An all-weather accessible path has recently been installed around the pitches. Throughout the school year children have opportunities to explore an enclosed Nature Garden.

### **Proposed School Catchments for GME**

- 6.1 There are 6 other primary schools within the Thurso ASG. Approximate travel distances and times to Mount Pleasant Primary from the other schools are set out below:

Castletown Primary – Mount Pleasant Primary – 5 miles, 8 minutes travel time.

Crossroads Primary – Mount Pleasant Primary – 10.2 miles, 14 minutes travel time.

Halkirk Primary – Mount Pleasant Primary – 7.5 miles, 13 minutes travel time.

Miller Academy Primary – Mount Pleasant Primary – 0.8 miles, 3 minutes travel time.

Pennyland Primary - Mount Pleasant Primary – 1.3 miles, 4 minutes travel time.

Reay Primary - Mount Pleasant Primary – 11.2 miles, 18 minutes travel time.

- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 The Council is sympathetic to the idea that Gàidhlig Medium Education should be accessible as many pupils Highland as possible, provided it is practical and reasonable to provide access.
- 6.4 By the standards of Highland geography, the Thurso ASG is relatively compact and travel distances are shorter than in many other secondary school catchments.
- 6.5 The Council therefore proposes that the GM catchment for Mount Pleasant Primary will overlay the English Medium catchments of Castletown, Crossroads, Halkirk, Miller Academy, Pennyland and Reay primaries, but with restrictions on transport as set out below.
- 6.6 In considering the principles of Best Value – see paragraph 1.2 above - Highland Council has noted that to provide dedicated transport from the areas covered by the Castletown, Crossroads, Halkirk, and Reay catchments could result in an unacceptably high level of additional cost to the taxpayer.
- 6.7 The Council therefore proposes that the provision of school transport from the catchment areas of Castletown, Crossroads, Halkirk, and Reay primary schools to GME at Mount Pleasant Primary will be on the basis of utilising the existing transport for Thurso High School. Dedicated transport by taxi or minibus will not normally be provided.

- 6.8 The map at **Appendix B** shows the current school catchments for the Thurso ASG (outlined in red), with the proposed GM catchment outlined in blue.
- 6.9 No changes are proposed for these catchments in respect of English Medium education.
- 6.10 For the purposes of GME, the Thurso High School catchment will be the same as the school's existing catchment.

### **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 Paragraph 6.7 above explains why no effects on school transport are anticipated.

### **Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements**

- 9.1 At the present time there are 20 children in the area attending GME. The Council does not expect any significant impact on school rolls in the short term. It is possible that numbers may increase in the medium to long term and that this could have a limited effect on the rolls of the other neighbouring schools. This however remains a hypothetical scenario. Any reductions in staffing that result will be handled in accordance with the agreed redeployment procedures.

### **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 Mount Pleasant Primary School, 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 Care, Learning and Housing Committee of the Highland Council.

