

Ardgour Community Council Response

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Acharacle GM Catchment area consultation. Ardgour Community Council (CC) would like to make the following response:

Considering the proposal, we deemed the main hindrance to Ardgour PS pupils being included in the proposed catchment for Acharacle GM school was the distance and associated cost of travel. The proposal suggests that 15 miles is deemed the furthest appropriate distance for primary pupils to travel.

Ardgour CC would consider the lack of the right to free transport to Acharacle PS (APS), a serious reduction in parental choice. The CC consider that parents in Ardgour should be given the opportunity to access either APS or Bun Sgoil Gaidhig Loch Abair (BSGL) with equitable provision to free transport and also with equitable provision as the other peninsula schools in the Ardnamurchan HS Catchment. Following the HC Gaelic Language Policy, we should be encouraging young people to stay within their own communities and develop bi-lingual skills. It is recognised by the CC that pupils who attend BSGL are more likely to follow secondary education through to LHS encouraging our young people to leave the area in which they live. The gaelic provision at Ardnamurchan High School and at Acharacle GME is recognised as being of a very high standard and brings young people across the peninsula together in a way that was not happening previously.

Points raised at our recent meeting included:

1. During previous historical communications with Area Manager (West) concerning the proposal to dual Lochaline Primary School and Ardgour Primary School, it was stressed that linking a school within the Ardnamurchan ASG was of primary importance in maintaining the specific nature of the peninsula culture, ethos and heritage. This statement was made during discussion on why it would be considered inappropriate to link Ardgour PS with a primary in the Onich/Balachulish area.
2. Following the decision of some parents in the Achaphubuil Primary school catchment area to remove their children to Banavie which eventually led to mothballing of Achaphubuil Primary, Highland Council was happy to provide transport to Banavie PS which is a greater distance than 15 miles. Please note that the distance to Ardgour PS for Achaphubuil residents and communities further west is less than 15 miles.
3. A further point on distance is that the furthest outreach of the Ardgour PS catchment is 5 miles from Acharacle PS and, whereas the majority of Ardgour PS pupils come from the Ardgour and Clovullin areas, this would only mean an additional 5 miles to the arbitrary 15.

We have an amazing educational provision on the peninsula, including excellent GM provision at primary and secondary levels and would not wish to see this undermined by the exclusion of Ardgour PS pupils from the catchment for Acharacle GM school and potentially Ardnamurchan High School.

We request parity for GME provision for Ardgour and Lochaline with the other 3 peninsula schools and that they should be included within the catchment area for Acharacle GME Unit.

Kind regards,
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