

Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Response on the Highland Council Consultation on GME Catchment Area for Craighill Primary School / Tain 3-18 Campus

1. Introduction

Bòrd na Gàidhlig welcomes in principle, the initiative to establish school catchment areas for Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in the above listed schools. The Bòrd recognises that Highland Council is moving to the establishment of catchment areas where there does exist GME provision in the Council's area. 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.

2. Consultation Information

The Highland Council say they want to establish catchment areas for the following reasons:

- The Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education recommends that Local Authorities establish catchment areas for GME.
- There is currently a lack of clarity for parents and carers seeking to access GME in the communities served by the GME provision listed. The Local Authority is undertaking the exercise in line with the duty to provide Best Value in service delivery.
- The Local Authority has used the practice of providing transport within a reasonable travelling distance, which has generally been understood to mean within 15 miles of a school delivering GME.

3. Council recommendations

GME Provision in Craighill Primary School / Tain 3-18 Campus

In principle Bòrd na Gàidhlig supports the establishment of a clear catchment area for the GME provision in Craighill Primary School / Tain 3-18 Campus, both Secondary and Primary provision, as proposed by the Highland Council.

- Bòrd na Gàidhlig note that parents have raised concerns that Golspie ASG has not been included in the catchment area when historically, families from this ASG have previously accessed GME at Craighill Primary School.
- We note that the consultation document indicated families are currently accessing GME from Invershin, which is in the Lairg Primary School catchment area and part of Golspie ASG. The proposal that these families will continue to receive transport, until they complete GME, is welcome.
- Highland Council should give due consideration on whether it is appropriate to remove transport to GME from any future families living within the Golspie ASG. While we appreciate that travel time from some areas within the Golspie ASG may be prohibitive, other areas are accessible with parents opting for GME currently and in the past.

We welcome the proposal that should the mothballed GME provision at Bonar Bridge re-open due to increased demand, that the GME catchment for Tain would require to be amended, and new GME catchment published for Bonar Bridge Primary School.

4. Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education

The Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education recommends that catchment areas be established for schools where Gaelic-medium education (GME) is provided (Section 2.53 & 2.54).

Catchment Areas and Placing Guidelines

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.

2.54 states:

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.

Therefore, Bòrd na Gàidhlig welcomes in principle, the recommendation that a catchment area be established for Gaelic Medium Education in the listed school in this public consultation.

