

ALL GAELIC SCHOOL CONSULTATION FINDINGS

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings of the 10 week consultation that was carried out between 22nd April and 30th June 2024, in fulfilment of action 2.11 of the Council's Gaelic Language Plan:-

“Argyll and Bute Council will engage fully and constructively with Bòrd na Gàidhlig, as adviser on Gaelic education, and other stakeholders (including parents and parent representatives) with a view to bringing forward, within the next 2 years, a consultation to ascertain the demand for an all-Gaelic School within the local authority area.”

- 1.2 Members are being asked to:-

- a) Consider the findings summarised at paragraphs 4.8 to 4.15 of the report, together with the raw data available [here](#) gathered as part of the exercise, and to determine what further actions they wish to take.

ALL GAELIC SCHOOL CONSULTATION FINDINGS

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report sets out the findings of the 10 week consultation that was carried out between 22nd April and 30th June 2024, in fulfilment of action 2.11 of the Council's Gaelic Language Plan:-

“Argyll and Bute Council will engage fully and constructively with Bòrd na Gàidhlig, as adviser on Gaelic education, and other stakeholders (including parents and parent representatives) with a view to bringing forward, within the next 2 years, a consultation to ascertain the demand for an all-Gaelic School within the local authority area.”

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are being asked to:-

- b) Consider the findings summarised at paragraphs 4.8 to 4.15 of the report, together with the raw data available [here](#) gathered as part of the exercise, and to determine what further actions they wish to take.

4.0 DETAIL**Background/Context**

- 4.1 Argyll and Bute Council have a duty under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 to prepare and publish a Gaelic Language Plan (GLP). These plans are submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig, a body corporate established by Scottish Ministers which, under section 5(1)(a) or (b) of the 2005 Act, must either approve the plan or propose modifications to it.
- 4.2 At the Council meeting held on 23rd February 2023 a report was tabled updating on the decision taken by Scottish Ministers on 16th December 2022 that the Council's GLP had been approved subject to the amendment of action 2.11, which sets out that *“Argyll and Bute Council will engage fully and constructively with Bòrd na Gàidhlig, as adviser on Gaelic education, and other stakeholders (including parents and parent representatives) with a view to bringing forward, within the next 2 years, a consultation to ascertain the demand for an all-Gaelic School within the local authority area.”*

4.3 This forms the basis for the engagement and consultation exercise that was carried out between 22nd April and 30th June 2024, with the purpose of ascertaining the level of demand and support for an all-Gaelic School within Argyll and Bute.

Consultation Approach

4.4 The 10 week consultation was carried out in line with the Council's agreed Consultation Toolkit, which was recently subject to scrutiny and review by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee and deemed fit for purpose. The toolkit draws on lessons learned from previous consultations and from best practice set out in the National Standards for Community Engagement

4.5 An [Engagement Strategy](#) was prepared, in both English and Gaelic, as part of the consultation documentation issued to stakeholders. This included relevant background information, details of the current provision of Gaelic education across the area, the national position, and a copy of the consultation survey / how to engage with the exercise. In line with action 2.11 of the GLP, the Council undertook 3 engagement meetings with Bòrd na Gàidhlig between December 2023 and February 2024 to discuss our approach to the consultation and to obtain feedback on the engagement strategy.

4.6 Following endorsement of the approach and the associated timelines, Officers then proceeded with implementing the agreed operational plan. Ahead of the publication of the consultation on 22nd April, a copy of the engagement strategy and a link to the consultation survey was issued to all stakeholders during w/c 15th April, including: -

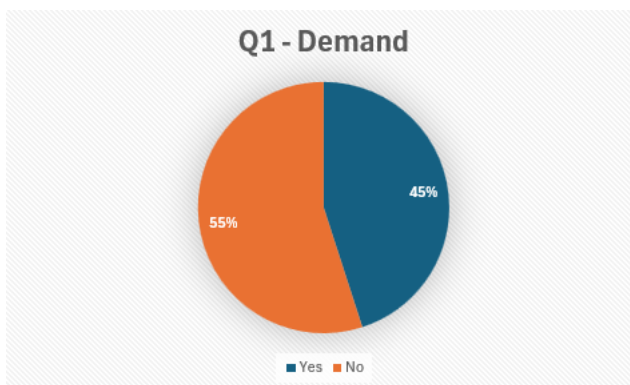
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig
- Elected Members
- All Pupils
- All School Staff
- All Parent Councils
- Wider parent/carer community
- Parents of prospective pupils
- Education Trade Unions
- All Community Councils
- Comann nam Pàrent
- Spòrs Gàidhlig
- Comunn na Gàidhlig
- Stòrlann
- Fèisean nan Gàidheal
- Education Scotland
- Constituency/List MSPs and MPs
- Media
- General public

4.7 For the purposes of collating and analysing responses to the consultation it was agreed that an online survey would be undertaken using Google forms. As per the engagement strategy, the survey was provided in both English and Gaelic. Hard

copies of the survey questions were also made available, should this be required. Additionally, a dedicated email inbox was set up to provide a central repository for any questions or comments received in respect of the exercise. All responses to the survey (673) were received via the online forms, with the exception of one response which was submitted via email.

Summary of Findings

- 4.8 This section of the report provides a summary of the key findings of the consultation. The raw data received in respect of each of the 673 responses (anonymised) is available [here](#).
- 4.9 In response to question 1 of the survey – “Do you think the Council should provide an all Gaelic School in Argyll and Bute?” – the chart and table below illustrates that of the 673 responses received during the 10 week consultation period, 45% of respondents were in favour of an all Gaelic School, with 55% of respondents not in favour. Of the 673 responses received, 8 of these were made via the Gaelic survey.



- 4.10 Question 2 of the survey invited those in favour of an all Gaelic School to provide reasons for this view. A representative sample of the answers provided in response to this question are provided below:-

- To keep the Gaelic language alive
- Preservation of Scotland’s history, culture and heritage
- Benefits of being bi-lingual
- To allow for a full immersive learning environment - not possible in current units
- To increase the quality of learning / long term sustainability of Scottish language
- There is an increased demand for Gaelic education
- Increase access to career opportunities within Gaelic sector
- To learn a new language
- To strengthen and encourage everyday use of Gaelic in Argyll and Bute
- Further promote and enhance GME in the area
- Continue Gaelic education into secondary school
- Same offer should be available in Argyll and Bute as per other areas (e.g. Glasgow, Edinburgh, Highland Council)

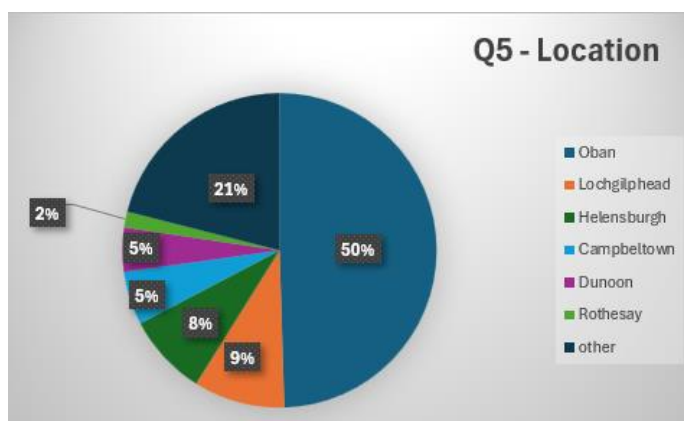
- Help to address current Gaelic teaching staff issues – attract and retain new teachers
- Argyll is the land of the Gael

4.11 Question 3 invited respondents who believe there should be an all Gaelic School to comment on what an all Gaelic School might look like. For example should it include ELC, primary, secondary or all of the above. An analysis of the results would indicate that the vast majority of those who answered this question would envisage a school covering 2-18 provision.

4.12 In the event that a proposal for an all Gaelic School progresses, there is a key consideration in terms of how this would be funded, therefore Question 4 of the survey invited views on how this could be achieved. A summary of some of the suggestions put forward are provided below:-

- Using the vast funding available to support the Gaelic language in Scotland
- Scottish Government
- Increase in Council Tax
- Gaelic language bursaries
- Fund in same way as any other school
- By the Council
- Funding from parents
- Central government
- Have fewer primary schools (join up existing ones)
- From existing education budget
- Reduce the budget of another service
- Bord na Gàidhlig
- Private sector funding / sponsorship
- Freeze pay of highest earners in Council
- Pick an existing school that could be utilised as a Gaelic school
- Community fundraising

4.13 A further key consideration is where such a new school would be located within Argyll and Bute. Of the 309 responses received to this particular question, the majority (50%) were of the view that Oban would be the most suitable location. Detailed below is a breakdown of the other feedback:-



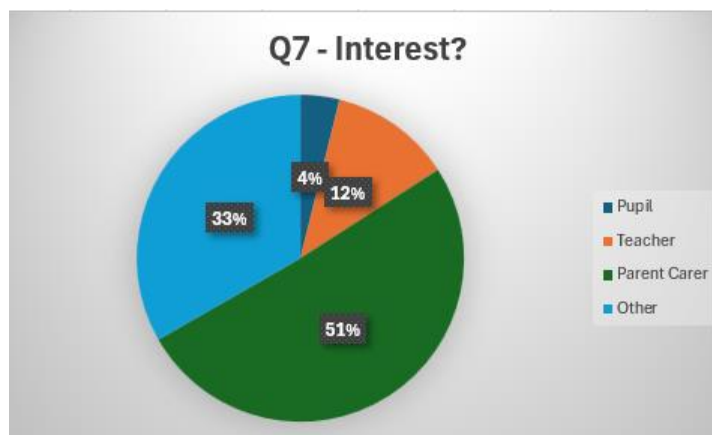
In terms of 'other', some of the suggestions made were:-

- Mull
- Tiree or Islay
- Inveraray
- Arrochar
- A central location with a hostel / good transport links
- Where there is most demand is for Gaelic education
- All schools

4.14 In terms of those respondents who answered 'no' to Question 1, they were invited at Question 6 to provide feedback on their reasons for not being in favour of an all Gaelic School. A sample of the comments made is provided below:-

- Waste of public funds
- Significant cuts require to be made across the authority – not the right time to consider investing in Gaelic education
- Gaelic is spoken by a minority – 1% of population
- Not a priority service – more important areas of spend
- No benefits to children for later in life
- Detrimental to pupils' literacy abilities in English
- Although part of our history, its not the best use of funding
- Gaelic should be taught in primary but thereafter should be down to the individual to pursue privately, like any other language such as Spanish
- Education budgets are already stretched – any funds should be used to improve current schools
- Given geography of Argyll and Bute not possible to locate a school which offers equality of access to all
- Current Gaelic provision cannot be met due to recruitment issues – how could a new school be staffed
- Having separate Gaelic education creates segregation and division amongst community and children

4.15 Question 7 asked respondents to detail their interest in an all Gaelic School and the chart below illustrates that the majority of responses came from parents/carers (51%). Pupil responses appear low in comparison to others but this is due to a number of schools submitting one response on behalf of the entire school or multiple classes/pupil councils.



In terms of 'other', a sample of the answers provided are detailed below:-

- Head Teacher
- Pupil Council
- Grandparent
- Parent and Teacher
- Gaelic speaker / learner
- Taxpayer
- Community member
- Home owner in Argyll and Bute

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 This report provides members with details of the findings of the recent consultation undertaken to establish the demand for an all Gaelic School within Argyll and Bute. The findings are summarised at paragraphs 4.8 to 4.15 of the report and details of the raw data collated as part of the exercise is available [here](#). The headline result of the survey is that 55% of the 673 respondents are not in favour of pursuing an all Gaelic School in Argyll and Bute, with 45% in favour.

5.2 The Council have now undertaken the necessary steps in terms of the requirements of action 2.11 of the GLP. Members now require to consider the findings of the consultation and to determine what further actions they wish to take.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy - none arising from this report
- 6.2 Financial – none arising from this report
- 6.3 Legal – none arising from this report
- 6.4 HR – none arising from this report
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty: none arising from this report
 - 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics
 - 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty
 - 6.5.3 Islands
- 6.6 Climate Change - none arising from this report
- 6.7 Risk - none arising from this report
- 6.8 Customer Service - none arising from this report
- 6.9 The Rights of the Child (UNCRC) - none arising from this report

Douglas Hendry
Executive Director with responsibility for Education

Policy Lead for Education – Councillor Audrey Forrest

2nd September 2024