

# Younger generation articulates their views of the future

## Harris Forum

In co-operation with the Sir E Scott School and Community Learning and Development, the Harris Forum asked pupils from S5 and S6 about their opinions in relation to six main topics: education and free time activities; housing; art, culture, music, and Gaelic language; natural surroundings and our landscape; climate change and renewable energy; transport and infrastructure. We wanted to know what they think is good within Harris or needs to be changed or improved to create a sustainable future. The quotes from the pupils are in bold.

During the consultation, the pupils showed a focus on studying and improving their skills. Beside them being happy to have such a **good sports centre with a gym and a swimming pool, football for all ages**, as well as a **pretty good school overall**, they notice a **lack of staff, lack of subject choice, and poor timetabling** and would love to see **more teachers and more resources** within their school in general. For their age group, particularly **more subjects, higher levels, and more opportunities for those going to university** would be beneficial. Based on their feedback, you could see their determination and eagerness to achieve good results. To be able to focus on their studies, they've asked for **more discipline for younger pupils** to have a **better environment for studying** because the **balcony is too loud during primary lunchtime**. The need for a space to study was highlighted repeatedly. In their opinion, a solution could be provided through **easier access to the library and less assemblies (and shorter ones when necessary)**. But next to their focus on studying, there also needs to be a balance of free time and physical activities. They wish to have **opportunities for pupils with study periods to access the gym and swimming pool**, as well as expand the range of sports on offer, like **SES Netball team, more workout classes, more equipment in the gym, and more opportunities for girls**. They are aware of the opportunities other schools have and they would wish to have **more or just any school trips**. While **Uist are going abroad, our school hasn't in over 10 years**.

Most pupils highlighted the **nice views** from their houses and the **good culture in many, if not all, neighbourhoods** throughout Harris. The **good quality of council houses, lots of space for houses** throughout the island, and in particular the **housing development in Leverburgh** were mentioned under the positives in relation to housing. But there is a need to **make housing more affordable**, to create **more houses, to improve the water and electricity supply, reduce power cuts, make housing cheaper for young people from Harris, and to make it harder for**

**people outside of Harris to use their houses as holiday homes**. The holiday homes were especially mentioned a few times, and it was even suggested on multiple occasions to introduce a **holiday house tax** to solve the issue. It was also mentioned that there was no need for **more council homes, but it should be made easier for people to buy land to build houses or to buy houses**.

The younger generation is fully aware of the **stunning scenery with clean air and environment** they live in. Which includes **lots of walks, clean beaches, and a good environment for pets**. For a better experience of their natural surroundings and our landscape, they would like to have **more circular paths, shorter** as well as **longer walks** in combination with **more benches and picnic areas**. But in general, **better paths throughout Harris** with a focus on certain paths like the one at **Scalpay Lighthouse** are desired.

To protect their natural surroundings, they ask for **less sheep on the road, more bins located around Harris to minimise litter, less Gunnera, more conservation efforts, sustainable tourism, access to nature, but also community engagement**.

**Wind turbines** were seen as positive, and so was the **small industrial area** and good **agricultural economy**. According to the pupils, **Harris is looked after** when it comes to climate change and renewable energy. But to improve it for the future, **more hydro schemes, more offshore wind turbines, more electric charging points, more beach clean ups, and a better education about recycling and climate change** are needed. It was also highlighted that **plastic blown during storms in West Loch Tarbert needs to be cleaned** more regularly.

In relation to transport and infrastructure, besides the **theory tests in the Community Centre, the fry up on the ferry, and refreshments on Loganair flights, buses, ferries, clean buses, youth ferry vouchers, and in particular friendly and polite bus drivers** were mentioned as positive elements. The problems are not having **connecting bus times (not having to wait hours in between buses)**, and the availability of certain bus runs. **More bus times, at earlier and later times, more runs to all areas in Harris, especially to Stornoway, late buses back to Harris every weekend, limited Bays buses and limited buses going to Husinish** which make a use of the tennis court impossible, were some of the comments in how the transport needs to be improved. The pupils provided constructive feedback and asked for **cleaner and more bus stops, better shelter from rain and wind, not needing to pay 20p for the Stornoway bus toilet and**

if we must pay, at least provide a working hand dryer. It was particularly highlighted that the **Scalpay bus is too early at school**. In relation to general infrastructure, **flood lights should be installed at MacQueen Street astro**, in return, **streetlights could be removed for floodlights, so there isn't an issue with the number of lights in the village**. There were also general requests for **lower prices for flights, direct flights to places such as London and Amsterdam, connecting buses (not having to wait hours in between buses), ferry routes to small isles, elsewhere in Skye, and local discounts on buses**.

Art, Culture, Music and Gaelic Language play a vital role in the community. **The Gaelic education in primary school, events such as the Mòd, Deasbad, Heb Celt, EDF, and Fèis which promote Gaelic language, Gaelic media like Radio nan Gàidheal and BBC Alba, Gaelic clubs of children's TV such as the Clangers, the occasional Gaelic café** are highlighted in a positive way as well as that **Gaelic is always spoken and heard in the community**. To preserve the Gaelic language within our community the pupils would like to see **more opportunities for non-fluent Gaelic speakers to learn and use Gaelic in everyday life, more classes about culture in the Highlands and Islands, more competitions and opportunities, ladies and gents choirs, so that there is a chance for people to pursue with their Gaelic choir after school as well as**

**more Gaelic cafés**. Besides the focus on Gaelic, there was a need for **more art displayed around Harris (e.g. sign posts), more cèilidhs, and more music workshops**.

All provided feedback during part 1 and part 2 of the community consultation stage for a Local Place Plan for Harris, will be accumulated and taken into account to produce one all-encompassing map. The map will be displayed in some of the accessible establishments in the next couple of months, for the community to comment on and add to it.

*There is consideration to hold a local business consultation in relation to the local place plan as well. If businesses are interested to have a specific consultation organised for them, please get in touch latest by the 24<sup>th</sup> of March.*