

Comhchoiste Oireachtas um Oideachas agus Scileanna, 19/12/2017

Ráiteas Tosaigh GRETB / Opening Address

Tomás Mac Pháidín, Oifigeach Oideachais agus Stiúrthóir na Scoileanna, GRETB; Cathaoirleach ar Fhóram Gaeloideachais ETBI

Cúlra agus Ról GRETB

Ba mhaith le GRETB buiochas a ghlacadh as ucht cuireadh a thabhairt dúinn teacht os comhair Comhchoiste Oireachtas um Oideachas agus Scileanna, chun dúshláin scoileanna ar oiléain a chíoradh. Is mise Tomás Mac Pháidín, Oifigeach Oideachais agus Stiúrthóir na Scoileanna le GRETB, agus tá ról agam mar **Chathaoirleach ar Fhóram Gaeloideachais ETBI**, a thacaíonn le coláistí lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta san earnáil ETB. Tá Mairéad Thompson, ceann Gnóthaí Corparáideacha GRETB ag tacú liom.

Bunaíodh Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna na Gaillimhe agus Ros Comáin (GRETB) ar 1 Iúil, 2013 faoin Acht um Boird Oideachais agus Oiliúna, 2013, agus mar chónascadh de thrí Choiste Gairmoideachais (Cathair na Gaillimhe, Contae na Gaillimhe agus Contae Ros Comáin). Tháinig an an t-Ionad Oiliúna FÁS i Mervue, Gaillimh faoi choimirce GRETB i Mí Iúil 2014.

Cuireann GRETB raon leathan seirbhísí oideachais ar fáil i gceantar an-fhairsing in larthar na hÉireann. Freastalaímid ar dhaonra ilchineálach, agus cuirimid seirbhísí ar fáil do dhaonra os cionn 342,000 (An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh 2016). Áirítear oideachas dara leibhéal, breisoideachas agus oiliúint agus cláir oideachais agus油iúna phobalbunaithe i measc na seirbhísí sin. GRETB a fheidhmíonn agus a bhainistíonn ionad Oideachais Sheachtraigh Cheapach na gCapall ar an bhFairche, ionad i bPríosún an Chaisleáin Riabhaigh agus ionad Oideachais do dhídeanaithe i mBealach an Doirín.

Seirbhís	Líon suíomhanna	Líon rannpháirtithe 2016/17
Dara Leibhéal & iar-Ardteistiméireacht	20	6,532
		*Líon iomlán tairbhithe 2016
Ionaid Bhreisoideachais agus Oiliúna	40	20,771

* Tagraíonn tairbhithe don líon iomlán rannpháirtithe ar ár gcláir ó 1 Eanáir 2016 go 31 Nollaig 2016.

Tá GRETB i ndiaidh cumarsáid dhearfach, leanúnach a dhéanamh leis An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, agus le Ranna Rialtais eile (a bhfuil gnéithe de dheacrachtaí na noileán faoina gcúram) ag leagan amach go soiléir na dúshláin áirithe atá ag an líon an-mhór scoileanna beaga atá faoi phátrúnacht agus faoi bhainistíocht GRETB, i gcomparáid leis an 15 Boird Oideachais agus Oiliúna eile, áit ar ghnáth le ETB scoil bheag amháin nó cúpla ceann a bheith faoina gcúram, ach ní 6 scoil < 100 scoláirí mar atá ag GRETB. Mar chaschtach bhereise sa scéal, tá 8/20 scoileanna de chuid GRETB ag múineadh trí Ghaeilge, agus 7 díobh seo mar scoileanna beaga Gaeltachta, agus 3 cinn den 7 suite ar Oileáin scoite amach ón gcósta.

I 2013, bhunaigh GRETB dhá scoil nua, Coláiste Mhuirlinne agus Coláiste Bhaile Chláir, a bhfuil 1500 scoláirí eatarthuanois, agus tháinig fás mór ar líon na scoláirí i gColáiste na Coiribe, Coláiste Pobail Ros Comáin agus roinnt scoileanna eile de chuid an Bhoird, gan aon ardú ar bhuiséad ONP ó 2012 go dtí 2016 ag GRETB chun deileáil leis seo uile. Tháinig ardú beag ar bhuiséad ONP i 2016, ach bhí méadú as cuimse ar líon scoláirí agus méadú ar líon scoileanna GRETB.

	Scoláirí	ONP
2012	5,339	€2.742m
2015	6,293	€2.475m
2016	6,532	€3.022m

D'fhág seo uile, maraon le laghdú ar líon múinteoirí ceadaithe ó 2009 i leith, na scoileanna ar na hoileáin ag sleamhnú ó chruachás i dtreo na géarchéime, de réir mar a laghdaigh cumas GRETB ó bhliain go bliain acmhainní a thógáil ó scoileanna eile de chuid an Bhoird chun na hoileáin a chothú, seo toisc fás 25% ar líon scoláirí i scoileanna GRETB ó 2012.

Tá iar-bhunscoileanna ar oiléain de chuid GRETB agus go deimhin an Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna féin i ndiaidh roinnt bheag deacraí móra a chur in iúl don Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna (agus freisin cúpla ceann a bhaineann le roinn na Gaeltachta).

Is iad seo a leanas na mór deacraí móra gan réiteach:

Riachtanas go gcruthófaí Polasaí um Oideachas ar Oileán atá scoite amach ón gcósta

Tá géarghá le polasaí cuimsitheach, comhtháite maidir le soláthar, cothú agus daingniú fadtéarmach de sheirbhísí oideachais ar oiléain scoite amach ón gcósta, a bheith ag An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, ag Bord Oideachas agus Oiliúna na Gaillimhe agus Ros Comáin (GRETB), agus ag Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Dhun na nGall (DETB) agus Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Éireann (ETBI).

Post ag leibhéal Stiúrthóra in ETBI de dhíth

Tá iarratas déanta ag ETBI ar DES ó 2016 chun post ag leibhéal Stiúrthóra a cheadú agus a mhaoiniú chun tacú leis an 40+ coláistí lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta atá á riadar ag na 16 ETB. Bheadh bunfheidhm ag an bpost seo cabhrú le formhór na gColáistí Gaeltachta (iar-bhunscoileanna) áit a bhfuil 2/3 den soláthar iomlan sa tír (40/60 scoil) á dhéanamh ag an earnáil ETB. Tá na 5 oiléain le hiarbhuinoideachas san earnáil ETB chomh maith agus go deimhin sa Ghaeltacht. Tá roinnt postanna eile maoinithe ag an stát ó 2016 d'eagraíochtaí éagsúla, poiblí agus príobháideach, chun tacú le cur i bhfeidhm an **Polasaí um Oideachas sa Ghaeltacht**. Níl aon phost ceadaithe áfach do ETBI, ná aon mhaoiniú chun post a chruthú, ainneoin an earnáil ETB a bheith mar bhainisteoir agus mar phátrún ar fhormhór na niarbhunscoileanna Gaeltachta in Éirinn.

Leithroinnt Múinteoirí

Ní aithníonn an múnla leithroinnte múinteoirí, mar atá, riachtanais agus dúshláin scoileanna na n-oileán (idir an PTR agus leithroinnt eile). Is é nadúr scoileanna油leánda go mbeadh líon beag daltaí iontu, rud a chialláonn go bhfuil foirne teagaisc beaga iontu agus ní féidir curaclam oriúnach, caighdeánach a chur ar fáil le dáileadh beag múinteoirí, ná go deimhin an tseachtain chaighdeánach de 28 uair do scoláirí a sholáthar chun cloí le rialacha na Roinne Oideachais agus Scileanna.

Rochtain ar fhoireann chuí cháilithe

Tá sé an-dúshlanach múinteoirí cuí cáilithe, inniúl sa Ghaeilge a aimsiú chun teagasc ar na hoileáin. Leis seo bíonn athraithe go bliantúil i measc fóirne scoileanna oiléanda. Tá costas sa bheis ag baint le múineadh ar oiléan, idir costas taistil, costas lóistín agus costas maireachtála.

Buiséad Scoile Neamh Dóthaineach

Ní aithnítear an costas breise atá ar scoileanna oiléanda i leithdháileadh buiséid na scoileanna sin. Tá go leor costas sa bheis ar scoil oiléanda ach go háirithe costas taistil, costas laistis, costas breise deisiúcháin agus seirbhísí scoile. Tá costas ollmhór taistil ag baint le daltaí ag freastail ar imeachtaí ar an mór-thír, m.sh, cluichí, taispeántais, comórtais &rl, gnáth-imeachtaí scoile. Ní thugtar aon airgead breise do scoileanna ar oiléain, agus níl aon Pholasaí um Oideachas ar Oileán ag DES chun dul i ngleic leis an gceist seo.

Rollú agus Scoláireachtaí

Is é nadúr na scoileanna oiléanda go bhfuil daonra beag daltaí iontu. Tá tionchar aige seo ar an gcuraclam, líon na múinteoirí agus dá bhrí sin an líon deiseanna a chuirtear ar fáil do na daltaí. Faoi láthair, cuireann Roinn na Gaeltachta 30 scoláireacht ar fáil do na scoileanna iar-bhunoideachais ar thrí oiléain Árann. Teastaíonn méadú i líon na scoláireachtaí a chuirtear ar fáil ó 30 go dtí 60.

Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin: Stádas neamhspleách á lorg

Déantar Coláiste Naomh Eoin a bhainistiú ó Choláiste Cholmcille, Indreabhán, ar an mór-thír. Ba shocrú é seo a rinneadh ag an am chun go bhféadfáí oideachas iar-bhuncoile a chur ar fáil in Inis Meáin. Níl an córas mar atá ag freastal ar riachtanais Choláiste Naomh Eoin san am i láthair. Go deimhin, tá an socrú reatha ag cur as don dá scoil, Coláiste Naomh Eoin agus Coláiste Cholmcille, Indreabhán.

Rochtain ar na hOileáin

Níl an tseirbhís aeir ná an tseirbhís farantóireachta, mar atá, ag comhlíonadh riachtanais scoileanna na n-oileán. Iarrtar go gcuirfí seirbhísí taistil cuí, oiriúnach ar fáil, i gcomharliúcháin le GRETB, an fostá is mó ar thrí Oileán Árann, chun riachtanais na scoileanna a shásamh agus chun go mbeidh cinnteacht don todhchaí. Is é pobal scoileanna GRETB an úsáideoir is mó de na seirbhísí taistil.

Idir 2008 agus 2017 rinne GRETB (agus roimhe sin CGVEC) roinnt iarratais ar DES an maoiniú de €103/scoláire (**Irish and Bilingual Grant**) a bhronntar ar Ghaelcholáistí sna ceantair rachmasacha de na cathracha a cheadú dár gcuid scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge, ach níl seo faighe againn aon bhliain go dáta. Le 1,250 scoláirí ag freastal ar Choláistí Gaeltachta agus Gaelcholáistí, bheadh €128,000 PA do GRETB amháin, i bhfad os cionn an €60,000 a lorgaíodh ó DES chun maoiniú don trí scoil ar Oileán atá againn.

Tá GRETB thar a bheith sásta comhoibriú le DES agus ETBI chun na deacraí seo a réiteach dár gcuid scoileanna.

AGUISÍN A: Leagan Gaeilge d'aighneacht scríofa GRETB chuit Comhchoiste Oireachtais um Oideachas agus Scileanna, 2 Meitheamh 2017

Dúshlán Scoileanna Iar-bhunoideachais ar na hOileáin – Meitheamh 2017

Aighneacht GRETB chuit Comhchoiste Oireachtais um Oideachas agus Scileanna, 2 Meitheamh 2017

Réamhrá: Riachtanas go gcruthófaí Polasaí um Oideachas ar Oileán atá scoite amach ón gcósta

Tá an scoil i gcroílár phobail na n-oileán. D'oireasa na scoileanna, bunscoileanna agus scoileanna iar-bhunoideachais, bheadh na hoileáin i mbaol a mbánaithe. Níl ach cúig scoil iar-bhunoideachais ar oiléain na tíre. Tá dúshlán agus deacrachtaí ar leith ag na cúig scoil seo a bhaineann go sonrach le hoideachas ar oiléain agus a bhrónann míbhuntaiste ar leith ar phobail na scoileanna áirithe sin. Tá dúshlán ar leith ag na cúig scoil nach bhfuil cuimsithe ná réitithe ag aon Rannóg Stáit go dtí seo.

Tá géarghá le polasaí cuimsitheach, comhtháite maidir le soláthar, cothú agus daingniú fadtéarmach de sheirbhísí oideachais ar oiléain scoite amach ón gcósta, a bheith ag An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, ag Bord Oideachas agus Oiliúna na Gaillimhe agus Ros Comáin (GRETB), agus ag Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Dhun na nGall (DETB) agus Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Éireann (ETBI). Níl aon scoiléireacht ón Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna maidir le cén polasaí atá acu i leith oideachas ar oiléain ag an bun leibhéal ná ag an leibhéal iarbhuinoideachais. Níl soiléireacht do phobail na noileán cén duine ná cén rannóg sa Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna atá freagrach as oideachas ar oiléain scoite amach ón gcósta. De bharr na míshoiléireachta seo, is minic go dtíteann na deacrachtaí a ardaíonn pobail na noileán, boird bainistíochta na scoileanna ar oiléán, agus na Boird Oideachais agus Oiliúna le freagreachtaí i leith scoileanna iarbhuinoideachais ar oiléain, idir dhá stól sa Roinn. Tá iarrtha ag GRETB, DETB agus ag boird bainistíochta cuid de na hiarbunscoileanna ar ETBI tacú leo chun riachtanas pholasaí a chur ina luí ar an Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna. D'fhoinn seo a bhaint amach, tá teagmháil déanta le European Small Islands Federation (ESIF) agus le European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE) chun eolas a fháil ar cén cur chuige atá ag tíortha eile de chuid an Aontais Eorpaigh i leith oideachas ar oiléain, d'fhoinn moltaí polasaí a chur os comhair an Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna ó thaobh cur chuige maidir le hoileáin na hÉireann. Tá seo uile sa chomhthéacs go bhfuil daonra oiléán na hÉireann ag laghdú go leanúnach, aineoin daonra na tíre a bheith ag méadú.

Ní hionann dúshlán scoileanna na n-oileán agus dúshlán 'scoil bheag', cé go bhfuil cuid mhaith de na dúshlán chéanna i gceist. Caithfear dul i ngleic le dúshlán ar leith i scoileanna iar-bhunoideachais na n-oileán, chun soláthar oideachais cuí agus féarálte a chur ar fáil do dhaltaí na scoileanna seo.

Tá réiteach ar cuid de na dúshlán seo ar bheagán infheistíochta.

1. Leithroinnt Múinteoirí

Dúshlán: Ní aithníonn an múnla leithroinnte múinteoirí, mar atá, riachtanais agus dúshlán scoileanna na n-oileán (idir an PTR agus leithroinnt eile). Is é nadúr scoileanna oiléanda go mbeadh líon beag daltaí iontu, rud a chiallaíonn go bhfuil foirne teagaisc beaga iontu agus ní féidir curaclam oriúnach, caighdeánach a chur ar fáil le dáileadh beag múinteoirí, ná go deimhin an tseachtain chaighdeánach de 28 uair do scoláirí a sholáthar chun cloí le rialacha na Roinne Oideachais agus Scileanna.

Níl aitheantas ‘Scoil Comh-oideachasúil in Abhantracht Scoile Singil’ ag gach iarbunscoil oiléanda (m.sh. Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin), agus dá bharr níl an scoil sin ag fáil an leithroinnt de 0.5 WTE. Bronntar seo ar scoileanna atá astu féin gan aon scoil eile gar dóibh. Tugtar an t-aitheantas seo ar bhonn geografach i gcás nach bhfuil aon scoil eile laistigh de 32 km, ach ní aithnítear an dúshlán taistil atá ag scoil ar oiléán. Ainneoin go bhféadfadh scoil eile a bheith ar oiléán eile nó ar an mórhír, níl siad sin insroichte, agus dá réir ba cheart an 0.5 WTE seo a bheith ag gach ceann de na 5 scoil ar oiléán, seachas a bheith ag cuid díobh.

Tá iar-bhunscoileanna ar oiléán, atá scoite amach ón gcósta, faoi phátrúnacht agus faoi bhainistíocht GRETB agus DETB i measc na niarbhunscoileanna is lú ar fad sa tír. Go deimhin, tá Coláiste Ghobnait, Inis Oírr agus Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin, Oileáin Árann, i measc na trí scoil Oileánta is lú, agus iad freisin i measc na 10 scoil is lú ar fad in Éirinn. In aineoin seo, go dáta níl eirithe leo stádas nó aiteantas mar scoil bheag a bhaint amach ón Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, rud a bhronnfadh acmhainn teagaisc de 1.0 WTE ar gach scoil ar leith díobh. Réiteodh seo cuid mhaith de na deacrachtaí atá acu agus iad ag strachadh chun amchlár a chur le chéile. Tá an scoil is lú sa tír ar fad, atá suite ar Oileán Thoraigh, gan stádas oifigiúil mar scoil bheag ó DES.

I 2001, d'ainthin grúpa saineolaithe coimisiúnaithe ag Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna go raibh 43 scoil bheag astu féin sa tír, gan aon scoil eile in aice leo, ach go raibh sé (6) cinn de na scoileanna beaga seo nach raibh stádas scoil bheag bronnta ag DES orthu, agus nach bhfuair said an 1.0 WTE múinteoir sa bhreis dá réir sin.

“The additional allocation in recent years to small schools of part-time hours in areas such as guidance, remedial teaching and home school liaison has been beneficial in supporting and extending the range of services which these schools can offer. These schools now need to be given some guarantee of curriculum protection in the form of additional core staffing, extra funding or other supports.

In the school year 2000/01, 144 second-level school had enrolments below 250, a possible minimum viable enrolment. We are given to understand that approximately 43 of these would meet the criteria of small ‘stand-alone’.

.... Similar schools not included in the above group may be given curricular concessions and we recommend that they be given a similar allocation of one extra teaching post as entitlement rather than as a concessionary allocation. We estimate that the number of schools in this category currently not receiving this additional allocation on entitlement amounts to six.”

Tarlaíonn sé go bhfuil na scoileanna seo a leanas de chuid GRETB ar oiléain amach ón gcósta gan stádas scoil bheag:

- Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin
- Coláiste Ghobnait, Inis Oírr

Tá iarratas déanta ar roinnt ócайдí thar na blianta ag GRETB ar DES stádas mar Scoil Bheag a bronnadh ar Choláiste Ghobnait, Inis Oírr agus ar Choláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin, Árainn, toisc iad a bheith i measc na scoileanna is lú ar fad sa thír. Níl éirithe leo an stádas a bhaint amach, rud a choinníonn curaclam teoranta i bhfeidhm acu, atá níos cunga ná scoileanna eile, toisc gur gá bhlianghrúpaí éagsúla a mhúineadh sa seomra ceáonna ar an amchlár.

Tá contúirt ann go laghdóidh an múnla nua maidir le leithroinnt & dáileadh uaireanta Tacaíochta Foghlama líon na múinteoirí sna scoileanna oiléanda freisin thar am (ó 2019) le himeacht den 0.9 WTE leithroinnt teagaisc LS atá mar acmhainn reatha do gach scoil, beag beann ar chomh beag agus atá sí. Tá iarrtha ag ETBI agus ag GRETB ar DES athfhéachaint a dhéanamh ar thionchar den athrú seo ar na hiarbunscoileanna is lú, na 5 scoileanna ar oiléain ina measc.

Réiteach Molta: Tá sé riachtanach go méadófaí an leithroinnt múinteoirí do scoil oiléanda ó 1 WTE reatha go 2.5 WTE ex-quota (sin 1.5 WTE breise i 5 scoil). Is é an costas ar seo ná €327,090. Chinnteodh sé seo curaclam oiriúnach, deiseanna ar imeachtaí seach-churaclam agus chinnteodh sé sláinte & sábhálteacht daltaí agus foireann na scoileanna araon.

Iarrtar go gcuimseofaí gach ceann de na cúig scoil oiléanda mar ‘Scoileanna comh-oideachasúla in abhantracht scoile singil’ agus go dtabharfaí an leithroinnt de 0.5 WTE a thagann leis an aitheantas seo don chúig iarbunscoil oiléanda. Chomh maith ba cheart ‘stadas mar Scoil Bheag’ a bhronnadh ar gach iarbunscoil ar oiléán, agus an leithroinnt de 1.0 WTE múinteoirí a thagann leis sin a bhronnadh.

2. Rochtain ar foireann chuí chálithe

Dúshlán: Tá sé an-dúshlanach múinteoirí cuí cáilithe, inniúl sa Ghaeilge a aimsiú chun teagasc ar na hoileáin. Leis seo bíonn athraithe go bliantúil i measc foirne scoileanna oiléanda. Tá costas sa bheis ag baint le móineadh ar oiléán, idir costas taistil, costas lóistín agus costas maireachtála.

Réiteach Molta: Tá sé riachtanach chun inmharthanacht na scoileanna oiléanda a chinntiú go dtabharfaí ar ais an Liúntas Oileánda @ €1,600 do mhúinteoirí. Is é an costas a bheadh ar seo na €16,000 (10 WTE X €1,600), don mhéadú sa chostas múinteoirí atá ag teastáil. [Nóta: Choinnigh múinteoirí sa chóras roimh 2011 an liúntas seo ar bhonn pearsanta].

3. Buiséad Scoile Neamh Dóthaineach

Dúshlán: Ní aithnítear an costas breise atá ar scoileanna oiléanda i leithdháileadh buiséid na scoileanna sin. Tá go leor costas sa bhrefis ar scoil oiléanda ach go háirithe costas taistil, costas laistis, costas breise deisiúcháin agus seirbhísí scoile. Tá costas ollmhór taistil ag baint le daltaí ag freastail ar imeachtaí ar an mór-thír, m.sh, cluichí, taispeántais, comórtais &rl, gnáth-imeachtaí scoile. Ní thugtar aon airgead breise do scoileanna ar oiléain, agus níl aon Pholasaí um Oideachas ar Oileán ag DES chun dul i ngleic leis an gceist seo.

Réiteach Molta: Tá sé riachtanach go méadófaí buiséad don scoil oiléanda de €20,000. Is é an costas iomlán a bheadh ar seo ná €100,000, don chúig scoil.

4. Rollú agus Scoláireachtaí

Is é nadúr na scoileanna oiléanda go bhfuil daonra beag daltaí iontu. Tá tionchar aige seo ar an gcuraclam, líon na múinteoirí agus dá bhrí sin an líon deiseanna a chuirtear ar fáil do na daltaí. Faoi láthair, cuireann Roinn na Gaeltachta 30 scoláireacht ar fáil do na scoileanna iar-bhunoideachais ar thrí oiléain Árann.

Réiteach Molta: Teastaíonn méadú i líon na scoláireachtaí a chuirtear ar fáil ó 30 go dtí 60. Is é an costas a bheadh ar seo ná €150,000 (do Roinn na Gaeltachta).

5. Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin: Stádas neamhspleách á lorg

Dúshlán: Déantar Coláiste Naomh Eoin a bhainistiú ó Choláiste Cholmcille, Indreabhán, ar an mór-thír. Ba shocrú é seo a rinneadh ag an am chun go bhféadfaí oideachas iar-bhuncoile a chur ar fáil in Inis Meáin. Níl an córas mar atá ag freastal ar riachtanais Choláiste Naomh Eoin san am i láthair. Go deimhin, tá an socrú reatha ag cur as don dá scoil, Coláiste Naomh Eoin agus Coláiste Cholmcille, Indreabhán.

Réiteach Molta: Iarrtar go mbronnnfaí stadas neamhspleách ar Choláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin (ar an mbonn céanna agus atá cheana féin ag Coláiste Ghobnait Inis Oírr agus gach iarbunscoil oiléanda eile) agus go bhfaighidh an scoil sin an fhreagracht bainistíochta agus acmhainní,

ach go háirithe Príomhoide agus P.O. Tánaisteach, nach bhfuil ann faoi láthair. Iarratas ar stádas neamhspléach do Choláiste Naomh Eoin seolta chuig An Roinn Oideachas agus Scileanna le linn Meithimh 2017.

6. Stádas DEIS do Scoileanna ar Oileáin:

Dúshlán: De bharr a bheith scoite amach ón gcósta, agus na míbhuntáistí a bhaineann leis seo, ba cheart stádas DEIS a bhronnadh ar na cúig iarbunscoil ar oileáin. Tugann drochaimsir tríd an Geimhreadh dúshlán bhereise do scoláirí agus múinteoirí a bhíonn ina leithéid de scoileanna.

Tugann an easpa seirbhísí scoile trí Ghaeilge go ginearálta dúshlán, agus míbhuntáiste ach go háirithe do scoileanna ar oileáin (NEPS; seirbhísí mheabhar shláinte; seirbhísí sláinte ginearálta).

Is annamh go mbacann institiúid ard oideachais le cuairt a thabhairt ar scoileanna ar oileáin, ná iad a a chur san áireamh dá gcuid imeachtaí. Ní fhaigheann scoileanna ar oileáin cuairteanna in-scoile ná seirbhísí oideachais ar ghnáth-nós iad do scoileanna ar an mór-thír.

Réiteach Molta: Bronn stádas DEIS ar iarbunscoileanna ar oileáin.

7. Rochtaí ar na hOileáin

Dúshlán: Níl an tseirbhís aeir ná an tseirbhís farantóireachta, mar atá, ag comhlíonadh riachtanaí scoileanna na n-oileán.

Réiteach Molta: Iarrtar go gcuirfí seirbhísí taistil cuí, oriúnach ar fáil, i gcomharliúcháin le GRETB, an fostáí is mó ar thrí Oileáin Árann, chun riachtanaí scoileanna a shásamh agus chun go mbeidh cinnteacht don todhchaí. Is é pobal scoileanna GRETB an úsáideoir is mó de na seirbhísí taistil.

Conclúid

Is é mór-chostas chun dul i ngleic le roinnt de na mór-dúshláin a bhaineann leis an cúig iarbunscoil oileánda sa tír, ná €590,905 pa, ach d'athródh seo an saol ar na hoileáin agus na scoileanna ar na hoileáin ó bhonn. Thitfeadh an costas breise seo ar dhá Roinn Rialtais éagsúla, sé sin DES @ €440K agus Roinn na Gaeltachta @ €150K.

AGUISÍN B: copy of GRETB's written submission re Island Schools' Challenges to JOCES, 2 June 2017

Challenges of Post-Primary Education for Island Schools – June 2017

Aighneacht GRETB chuig Comhchoiste Oireachtais um Oideachas agus Scileanna, 2 Meitheamh 2017

Introduction: Requirement for Island Education Policy

Island Schools are at the heart of Ireland's Island communities. Without schools, primary and post-primary, islands would not survive. There are currently only five islands with small post-primary schools. These schools face inordinate unique challenges, which place the schools, parents, staff and most importantly, the pupils at a major disadvantage. Island post-primary schools have specific challenges that have not to date been adequately addressed by any Government Department. The challenges faced by island schools are additional to as those faced by 'small schools' elsewhere. Many of these specific challenges are surmountable, requiring thought and a little investment, and above all, a more flexible approach to regulations designed for much larger mainland schools.

A comprehensive, coordinated national island education policy is urgently required, which should address the provision, development and long-term sustainability of offshore island education services for primary, post-primary and Further Education and Training. The drivers of this policy need to comprise DES, GRETB, DETB and ETBI. The absence of any clear DES policy or coordinating unit regarding Island Education for either primary schooling or post-primary has caused difficulty for island schools' development, as it is not clear to offshore island schools' Boards of Management which person or section within DES has responsibility for these schools. As a consequence, island schools' challenges fall between several stools within the system, as island schools are treated as similar to all other (small) schools. GRETB, DETB and the Boards of Management of island schools have requested that ETBI support them in convincing DES to develop island specific policy and approach, which has regard to their unique circumstances. To develop this approach, the European Small Islands' Federation (ESIF) and the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE) have both been contacted to ascertain what arrangements exist in other countries within the EU to manage and sustain island schools. It is envisaged that this approach will assist ETBI, GRETB, DETB and island schools' BOMs in developing policy proposals to suggest to Minister for Education and Skills and Department of Education and Skills. All of this activity occurs against the backdrop of a fall in islands' population of 6% during a period when Ireland population is growing. These small offshore Island Schools all exist in Gaeltacht areas that are under pressure on all fronts. It would be of great assistance to Ireland's island schools, if DES could lead out on this policy development initiative.

1. Teaching allocation

Challenge: The current model of teacher allocation (PTR, Curricular Concessions and other associated allocations) does not sufficiently identify or address the unique challenges of the islands post-primary sector. The provision of a required curriculum is dependent on the provision of a suitable teacher cohort. Island schools, by nature, have small numbers of pupils, but those pupils require a full curriculum. A small teaching allocation cannot provide the range of subjects that schools, pupils, parents or the minimum 28 hour instruction week per pupil as the Department of Education & Skills requires.

Not all Island schools are in receipt of the ‘Co-Educational Single Catchment Area’ additional teacher allocation of 0.5 WTE, which is available to stand-alone schools, where no other education provision is available within approximately 32kms. While, geographically, island schools may not exceed the required minimum distance from other schools for this allocation, as measured by the Department, the real challenge of accessing the island schools is not recognised, as no transport links exist between island post-primary schools. Consequently, as schools that exist on other islands or on the mainland are not accessible, the co-ed single catchment 0.5 WTE should be available to all island schools.

Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin, has applied to DES for this necessary allocation each year, but has to date been unsuccessful.

For the past couple of decades the Department of Education and Skills has given a significant number of stand-alone small post-primary schools the official designation of ‘Small School’. This designation affords such schools an additional staffing designation of 1.0 WTE teachers, in addition to the teaching allocation generated by the national template approach for all schools of 19:1. The formal designation of such schools as small schools allows the smallest stand-alone schools to offer some limited subject choice, which would otherwise not be available. The five (5) post-primary off shore island schools under the patronage and management of GRETB and DETB are among Irelands’ smallest post-primary schools. Indeed within the category of island schools, Coláiste Ghobnait, Inis Oírr, (average 25 students enrolled) and Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin (average 27 students enrolled), are among the smallest of island schools, and are ranked among Ireland’s ten smallest schools. Notwithstanding this, to date, neither Coláiste Ghobnait, Inis Oírr, or Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin have secured designation from Department of Education and Skills as ‘small schools’ and neither has been allocated the additional 1.0 WTE teaching allocation from DES, despite several applications from GRETB to the Department of Education and Skills.

As far back as 2001, the Department of Education and Science commissioned an expert group to study and report on the allocation of teachers to second level schools. The DES expert group recognised that 43 vulnerable small stand-alone post-primary schools existed across Ireland, but that within that group of 43, six of these schools had not been awarded small school status nor had they been given the teacher allocation associated with such status.

“The additional allocation in recent years to small schools of part-time hours in areas such as guidance, remedial teaching and home school liaison has been beneficial in supporting and extending the range of services which these schools can offer. These schools now need to be given some guarantee of curriculum protection in the form of additional core staffing, extra funding or other supports.

In the school year 2000/01, 144 second-level school had enrolments below 250, a possible minimum viable enrolment. We are given to understand that approximately 43 of these would meet the criteria of small 'stand-alone'.

.... Similar schools not included in the above group may be given curricular concessions and we recommend that they be given a similar allocation of one extra teaching post as entitlement rather than as a concessionary allocation. We estimate that the number of schools in this category currently not receiving this additional allocation on entitlement amounts to six."

The allocation of Teachers to Second Level Schools – Report of the Expert Group to the Minister for Education and Science, (DES, 2001, P. 85-87).

For some reason, the following GRETB offshore island schools find themselves to be unfortunate members of the group of six without official designation as small schools.

Coláiste Ghobnait, Inis Oírr

Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin

The DES expert group report makes some specific recommendations regarding addressing these matters.

GRETB has made a number of applications to DES over the years, attempting to secure small school designation status for Coláiste Ghobnait and Coláiste Naomh Eoin. The failure by GRETB to secure this designation for these vulnerable small Gaeltacht schools on offshore islands has resulted in these schools having a more limited curriculum than might otherwise be available, including the necessity to have more than one year group being taught in a single class in some instances in these schools.

From 2019, the new model of delivering Learning Support and SEN provision is expected further reduce the teacher allocation in the island schools, with the removal of the 0.9 WTE LS allocation as a block allocation currently available to all schools below 500 pupils, irrespective of size. ETBI and GRETB has raised this matter with DES, and the Department has been asked to review the expected impact of the changes on the smallest post-primary schools, a category that includes Ireland's 5 island schools, which are those most likely to be adversely affected.

Proposed Solution: It is essential that the Island School core teacher allocation is increased from 1 to 2.5 WTE ex-quota posts (1.5 extra in 5 schools). At Basic Scale Pt. 10, the annual cost of this allocation would be €327,090. This will ensure that the five Island Schools provide the required curriculum to pupils and provide access to a range of extra-curricular activities and also enhance the health & safety of the school body.

All Island schools must be given the 'Co-Educational Single Catchment allocation' of 0.5 WTE. All Island schools should be officially designated 'small schools' by DES, and receive the associated 1.0 WTE teaching allocation. There are approximately only 220 pupils distributed across Ireland's 5 post-primary island schools, or an average enrolment of 44 pupils.

2. Accessing and Retaining Teaching Staff

Challenge: Living and teaching on an island is not for everyone. Hiring suitably qualified staff, competent ‘as Gaeilge’ and willing to teach on an island is extremely challenging and can involve a high degree of turnover of teaching staff.

Island teachers have to pay the additional costs involved in commuting to and from the islands. Many island teachers are forced to work part-time due to insufficient teacher allocation within island schools to support more substantial contract hours. Others are shared between schools (island and mainland schools) and are further burdened with additional accommodation costs as well as the travel costs. Also the cost of living on an island is more than on the mainland.

Proposed Solution: A return of the Island –Allowance of €1,600 for Teachers is essential to attract teachers to the Island Schools. The estimated cost of this for the 5 islands would be €16,000. (10 WTEs @ €1,600). [Note: All pre 2011 island teachers retained their allowances.]

3. Inadequate School budget

Challenge: Island schools’ budgets do not reflect the heavy additional costs of cargo transport, travel costs, school servicing and repairs (i.e. hourly charge while waiting for travel off the islands) and other additional costs. Island schools are overly burdened by the additional travel costs when pupils attend events on the mainland, which is part and parcel of school life, as all events are “away” fixtures. No additional ONP funding currently given by DES to island schools and no island education policy exists to engage with such issues.

Proposed Solution: It is essential that the island schools budget be increased by €20,000 per school to reflect the real costs in running post-primary island schools. The cost of this would be €100,000 PA. increase in Other Non Pay (ONP).

4. Enrolment and Scoláreachtaí

Challenge: Island schools, by nature, have small pupil populations. School curriculum and hence numbers of teachers depend on pupil numbers. The three Aran Island post-primary schools currently have 30 scholarship placements between them and these greatly enhance the opportunities afforded to the island schools pupils in terms of subject choice available.

Proposed Solution: It is requested that the number of scholarships granted by Roinn na Gaeltachta be increased from the current 30 to 60. The cost of this would be €150,000 pa, funded by Roinn na Gaeltachta.

5. Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin - Independent School Status

Challenge: Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin, has to date (from a governance and administrate perspective) been administered by Coláiste Cholmcille, Indreabhán, on the mainland, (distance of a 1 hour sea journey, in addition to 18km by road). This is a historical situation in order to provide post-primary education on Inis Meáin. Coláiste Naomh Eoin has little or no official recognition from the Department of Education &

Skills. This arrangement is now wholly unsuited to the current circumstances and is adversely affecting both Coláiste Cholm Cille and Coláiste Naomh Eoin.

Proposed Solution: Coláiste Naomh Eoin must be granted official independent school status and be provided with a Príomhoide and Príomhoide Tánaisteach, as exists in every other of the 726 post-primary schools. Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin, is the only school in Ireland that has only one management post sanctioned by DES, that of Múinteoir i bhFeighil. No Principal or Deputy Principal exist in Coláiste Naomh Eoin, contrary to the situation for the other four island schools. GRETB application to DES for independent status lodged with DES during June 2017.

6. DEIS Status for Island Schools

Challenge: Due to offshore nature of islands and significant disadvantage arising from this, DEIS status should be afforded to the 5 offshore island schools. Inclement weather conditions can have a detrimental effect on school attendance by pupils and staff.

The lack of availability of additional school-related services through Irish generally, particularly with regard to the Islands; NEPS, Mental-health services, Medical services, causes additional hardship and disadvantage.

Third-level institutions rarely include the islands in their drives for enrolment or information sessions.

Island schools do not enjoy the same degree of in-school visits as other schools; guest speakers, demonstrations, tutorials, information sessions for parents etc.

Proposed Solution: Award DEIS status.

7. Accessibility

Challenges: Ferry and Air services to the three Aran Islands are inadequate in providing access to and from the Islands for pupils, staff and other school related services.

Proposed Solution: It is requested that adequate, state-funded, PSO passenger transport access be provided to the islands, in consultation with stakeholders, the post-primary schools in particular. GRETB is the largest employer on the three Aran Islands and our school community is the largest user of transport services.

Conclusion:

The aggregate total cost of the required enhancement and allocations is estimated at €590,905 PA across two Government Departments. This investment does a lot more for the islands than the figure suggests. The additional value to the islands and contribution to island life of this investment in the five island schools is immeasurable.

