

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [forwardplanning](#)  
**Subject:** cdpreview \_Proposal for post-primary school on Inishbofin  
**Date:** Wednesday 9 September 2020 22:57:11  
**Attachments:** [Submission to GRETB for Post Primary School on Inishbofin.pdf](#)

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A Chara,

The 'Inishbofin Community Post- Primary Steering Group', on behalf of the parents and community of Inishbofin, are submitting our proposal regarding the provision of a Post -Primary school on the island this year.

Please see attached our proposal which was sent to Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB) in February 2020, which was received very favourably. During our research, it has become evident on other islands who have secondary schools, that education plays a vital role in an island's economy and development.

*(GRETB report pg 16) Within each island community, the provision of education service, including primary and post-primary school services has become a central aspect and recurring theme regarding the long-term sustainability of the islands themselves (DCHG, 2019; COÉ 2018).*

It is essential for the government to implement the Lisbon Treaty.(GRETB's Report public services pg 9 (also available) European Parliament Intergroup Seas, Rivers, Islands & Coastal Areas (SEARICA) within the European Parliament. SEARICA, which is binding on EU member states to ensure that the Cohesion Objectives of the Lisbon Treaty are delivered. Specifically, Article 174 of Lisbon treaty obliges EU Member states to make appropriate provision to eliminate or reduce disadvantage faced by remote areas, including islands through special measures, and specific policy initiatives:

<http://www.searica.eu/> has emphasised the importance of EU member states implementing Article 174 of Lisbon Treaty,

[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/treaty/tfeu\\_2008/art\\_174/oj](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/treaty/tfeu_2008/art_174/oj)

I can supply supporting documentation if you require more details.

Kind Regards,

Celine McCormack

Inishbofin Community Post-Primary Steering Group ( a group made up of parents and Inishbofin community representatives)

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**SUBMISSION TO GRETB FOR A POST PRIMARY SCHOOL ON  
INISHBOFIN ISLAND, CO. GALWAY.**

**7th February 2020**

**by**

**“Inishbofin Community Post-Primary Steering Group”**

[www.inishbofin.com](http://www.inishbofin.com)



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## 1 Introduction

The Inishbofin Community Post-Primary Steering Group, on behalf of the parents and community are seeking the assistance of GRETB regarding the provision of a post-primary school on the island. This document will show our reasoning and research.

### 1.2 Background to this submission

Inishbofin has been looking for a post primary school for many years. A comprehensive report on **Island Education** was commissioned by the Inishbofin Development Co. in 1996 and completed by Frieda Ryan (see supporting documentation for report), herself a teacher and regular visitor to Inishbofin. This included visits to the Western Isles of Scotland and communication with schools in Shetland, and questionnaires and interviews with Inishbofin families. The conclusion of this report was that provision of a secondary school on Inishbofin would be beneficial to local children. It outlines the crucial involvement parents play in their children's education, the importance of a family environment and the rights of families to keep their children with them. A balanced curriculum, tailored to the needs of the island children has worked extremely well in **Inis Meain**. Colaiste Naomh Eoin has won multiple awards such as a JP McManus award for best leaving cert results in 2018. Island Post Primary Schools have been pioneering examples of nurturing centres of excellence in education. The three Aran Island Post Primary schools are seen as paragons of excellence in island education for the European Small Islands Federation, demonstrating the benefits of island education for both the pupils attending and the overall island community. This demonstrates that small island schools should not be underestimated. (see letter of support from Colaiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Mein.)

In 2003 a **Proposal for the Options and Opportunities for a Second Level Education Service on Inishbofin, Co Galway** was put forward by Inishbofin Development Co. Ltd for funding through National Rural Development Funds. This was discussed at a public meeting and there wasn't sufficient support. There were few examples of similar sized post primary schools available for comparison at the time.

More recently, in 2019, Inishbofin Development Co. Ltd looked at the issue again.

## 2 Consultation

The current consultative process began in 2018 after parents approached the Inishbofin Development Company, to look into the possibility of developing a secondary school on the island as they had major worries and concerns about their children leaving. Following on from this, in May 2019, a meeting was held Tomás Mac Pháidín from GRETB met with the Acting Principal of the Inishbofin national School to discuss the possibility of a post primary school on Inishbofin.

Consequently, the acting principal of Inishbofin National School contacted the parents and facilitated a meeting to explore their level of interest of the possibility of developing a secondary school. This meeting in January 2020 was very positive. Tomas Mac Phaidin and Brid Ni Dhonnacha principal of Inis Oirr Secondary School, gave a presentation to the parents, children and the public regarding the possibilities. We included everyone in the process using emails and social media and we made sure

that all of the information we gathered was freely available and accessible to all. This was an open and transparent process.

In February a group of parents visited the post primary school on InisOirr. At a subsequent meeting all parents of preschool and national school children unanimously agreed to support the decision to pursue a post primary school on Inishbofin. \*

Now in 2020, the islanders still strongly feel that their children are being discriminated against by having to live away from their families in order to receive an education. The same issues identified in Frieda Ryan's first report are still relevant.

\*See Appendix A for current submission timeline

### 3 Inishbofin Island

The island of Inishbofin in Co Galway is situated off the NW coast of Connemara.

Inishbofin is 68 miles from Galway city, 14 miles from the nearest town of Clifden, and 7 miles by sea from the mainland port of Cleggan village. The island has an area of 1010 ha, is 5.6km long and 3.4 km and its maximum width. The highest point on Inishbofin is 292 feet.

Most of the coastline is rugged, but there are several bays where the land runs to the sea. Inishbofin has an excellent natural harbour on the south side and it is also one of the safest harbours in the country. The island has a long maritime history and still has a small fishing fleet today. The island has 3 piers, 2 functioning piers in the South harbour and one at the East End (destroyed in the 2014 storm)

The middle of the island is where most of the agricultural land is farmed, running east to west and this land is considered to be of very good quality. As an island, Inishbofin would be considered to be one of the most fertile islands off the west coast of Ireland.

The island is served by a ring road with spur roads serving the outer areas.

Inishbofin is accessed by one registered passenger ferry, which runs between Inishbofin harbour and Cleggan harbour. The passenger service is twice daily all year round and is subsidised by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. There is a freight boat service which runs on two days a week which is also subsidised by DCHG. There is an emergency service provided by helicopter, through the state emergency services, for the seriously ill, or on occasion the Clifden based RNLI.

Inishbofin has a two teacher National School, a full time Public Health Nurse, a Post Office and a grocery shop. The Community Centre houses many activities.

Most year round employment is through private tourism businesses, (tourism, building, private enterprise, state funded schemes, Galway County Council) as Inishbofin has a large tourism sector which includes 3 hotels, 2 restaurants, pub, hostel & campsite, 3 B&Bs, 38 self-catering and 34 holiday homes. The tourism sector is by far the largest earner for the island. Farming is still widely practiced on the island with over 35 herd/flock owners registered. Fishing has declined severely over the last 25 years with the island fleet standing at 1 half decker and 4 registered Curragh's. The fishing is mainly confined to lobster and crab. Inishbofin has a good internal infrastructure of roads, water mains, electricity, broadband and phone. Employment is seasonal for the tourism sector, fishing usually starts in March until October.

**Reference: "Inishbofin 2016-2021 Island Plan" by Inishbofin Development Co. Ltd.**

## 4 Population

Population decline up to the mid 1980's population was in steady decline but stabilised in 2016 the only year there was a slight increase to 175.

Year	1841	1851	1901	1951	1996	2002	2006	2011	2016
Population	1404	909	762	291	200	178	199	160	175

In 2002 Inishbofin population had a 25.8% unskilled manual social class classification above the County average. Also in 2002, the % of adults whose fulltime education ceased with primary only was recorded at 46.5% with those who ceased at 15 years old or younger was at 45%. This figure is high and would indicate that those who had reached full educational attainment did not return to the Island to live or work again.

In the past 5 years 2 locals with their families returned after an absence, as well as 2 individuals.

The current island population as of February 2020 is 145 (local stats). This includes the current secondary school children.

Island communities need to be revitalised, not discriminated against, this can be achieved with provision of services, infrastructure and education. Without this investment in islands, population will continue to decline with the detrimental effects such as that which happened on Sherkin Island. When the school closed after 123 years in existence.

Islands need investment in these services, especially education, in order for them to survive. A post-primary school on the island is a basic necessity.\*

*“Population change and enrolment: problems around declining enrolment have been noted as a common and serious problem by various studies on island schools, small schools, and schools in remote communities (ESIN, 2007; Liarakou et al 2014; Ares Abalde, 2014; Gill and Kelly, 2016). Across the OECD, many small schools have been closed or consolidated (Ares Abalde, 2014). ESIN (2007) note that ‘the problem of being small’ creates a range of problems, and ‘crucial services such as schools, if left solely to population numbers ... would disappear from small islands.’ (p.31). As noted above, Sherkin island school closed last year after 124 years in existence, following declining enrolment. “\**

Reference:

**Houses of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Skills Report on Challenges Facing Island Schools.”**

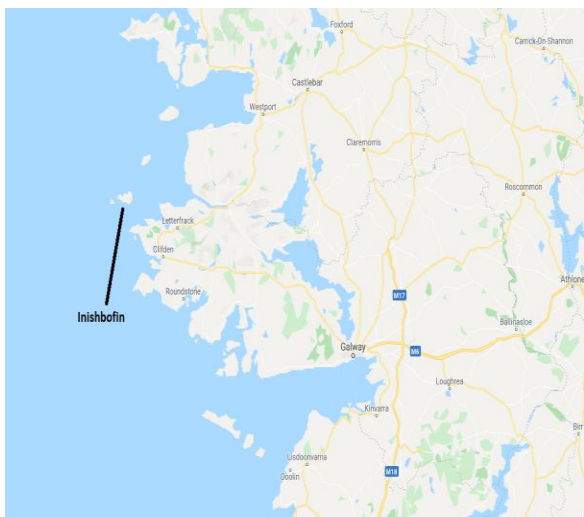
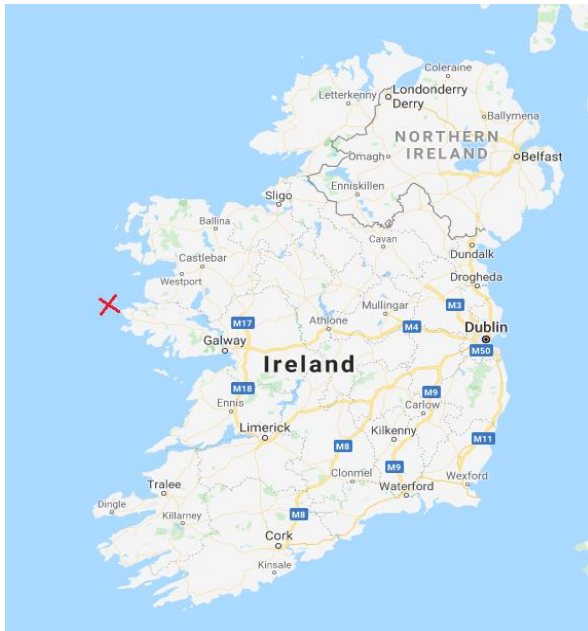
[https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint\\_committee\\_on\\_education\\_and\\_skills/reports/2018/2018-02-27\\_report-on-challenges-facing-island-schools\\_en.pdf](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint_committee_on_education_and_skills/reports/2018/2018-02-27_report-on-challenges-facing-island-schools_en.pdf)

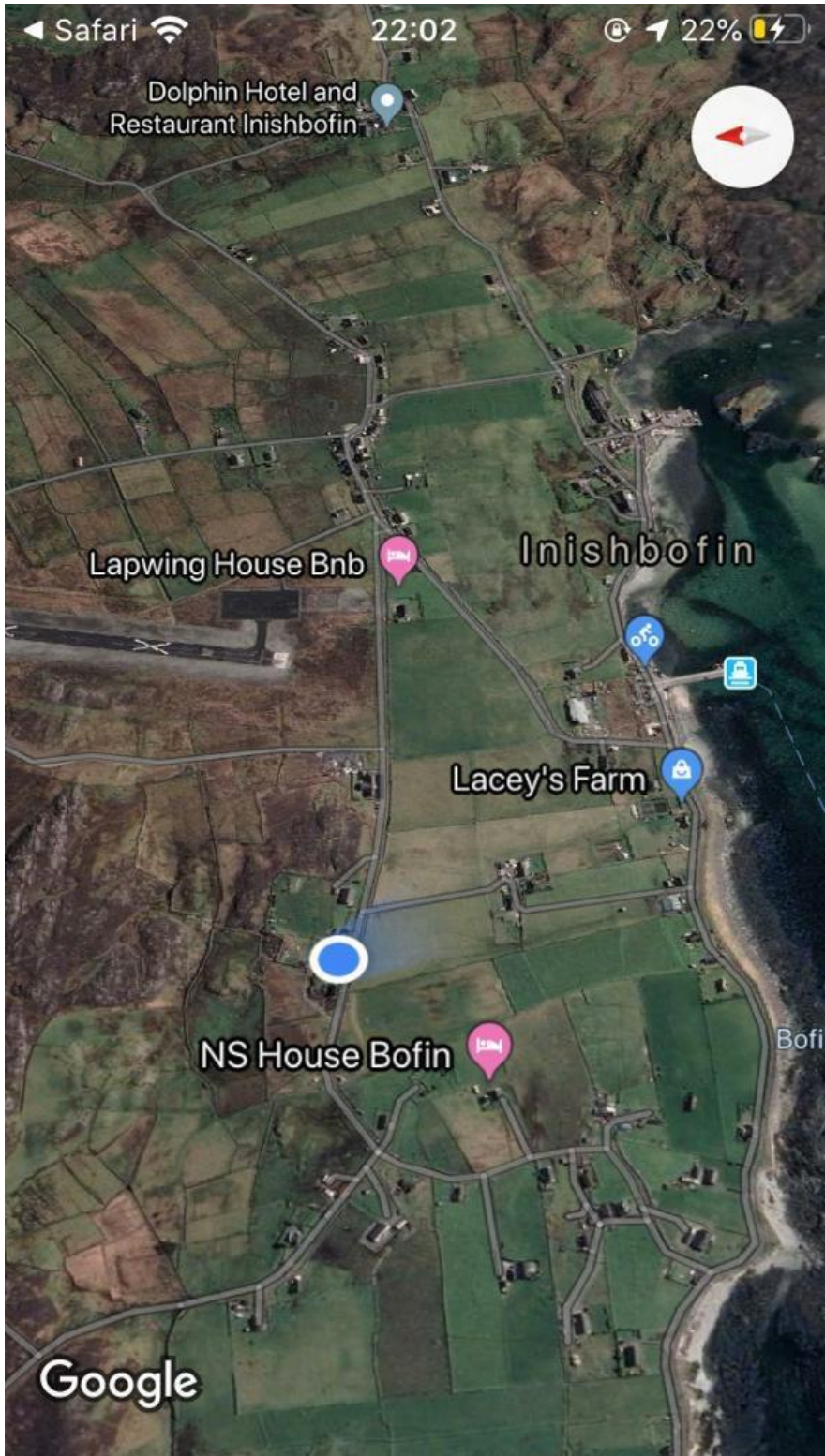
[http://census.cso.ie/sapmap2016/Results.aspx?Geog\\_Type=SA2017&Geog\\_Code=4c07d11d-f561-851d-e053-ca3ca8c0ca7f#SAPMAP\\_T15\\_1502](http://census.cso.ie/sapmap2016/Results.aspx?Geog_Type=SA2017&Geog_Code=4c07d11d-f561-851d-e053-ca3ca8c0ca7f#SAPMAP_T15_1502)



## 4.1 Location map

GPS: 53°36.75N, 10°12.45W





## 4.2 Transport

Transport - Passenger ferry from Cleggan, then onwards by taxi, bus or private car. The ferry crossing can be rough in winter, there are days when the ferry cannot operate due to bad weather.

There is no air service to Inishbofin.

33% of population have no formal or primary education only – this is more than **twice** the national average.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/media/pressrel/hse-launches-primary-care-island-services-review.ht>

Traditional jobs like fishing and farming have dwindled leaving many people reliant on social welfare or seasonal jobs in tourism.

## 5 Current Provision for Secondary Education for Inishbofin Children

Historically, from 1960 – 2000 boys from the age of 12 went to boarding schools to places like St Mary's Galway, St Jarlath's Tuam, or as day pupils lodging with families in Oughterard, St Enda's, Galway, Community School, Clifden and Rice College Westport or where ever relatives might find themselves living on the mainland. Girls from the same period boarded in schools such as Mercy Convent, Galway, St Brigid's, Convert of Mercy, Tuam, Presentation Convent, Tuam, Mercy Convent in Spiddal, Mercy Convent, Clifden, and even Kylemore Abbey. One girl had to enrol in a school in Westmeath to find a boarding school (Ryan 1996) suitable to her needs. Other girls again stayed with families in towns like Oughterard, Clifden, Galway City while others were educated in areas where they might have relatives who agreed to take children in such as Athenry and Galway. Since the demise of boarding school in the 1990s and the difficulty of finding families to take in Students the issue now is the movement of whole or partial families moving to the mainland for the school academic year and renting a second home.

Currently children attend schools in Clifden, Galway, Westport and Limerick. This means a child loses their peer group on starting post primary at a time when peers are of increasing importance to the development of independence and self- confidence and this contact is added to that of losing daily contact with and support from family.

Pupils resident on offshore island who do not have a second level school, qualify for a rural area boarding grant. Under the scheme families are allocated €4,947 per pupil per annum (which is the maximum). This doesn't cover rent or other outgoings.

Although the transport system to and from schools has much improved over the years' island parents have additional transport expenses. Often, additional buses have to be organised every Friday and Sunday to transport children to their schools.

Difficulties encountered in the present system for the pupils and their families: \*

- The difficulty of adjusting to a new and distant environment without the comfort of family not within easy reach.
- Younger and less assured pupils suffering from anxiety and nervousness through home sickness and the feeling of isolation.

- Children with special needs and/or medical conditions experience undue hardship and stress on having to leave home and family security. The present system is in no way suitable for such children.
- Not getting home as often due to bad weather, (although this has improved over the years with the improvement of better and larger boats and a regular boat service)
- High cost of maintaining fragmented families.
- The removal of whole families to the mainland and the subsequent removal of a significant proportion of the primary school cohort thus jeopardising the islands national school itself. Loss of peer cohesion through segregation to different schools on the mainland and beyond.
- Lodging with host families raise safeguarding issues. Many Island families sending their children to school on the mainland have no choice but to do so. This provides added stress.
- High chances of early school leavers, with a subsequent dependency on social welfare and emigration to survive in the longer term.
- Unlikelihood of permanent return of students to island base due to lack of equal opportunities, the corollary being islanders educated at home will be trained and encouraged to create employment for themselves.
- There is a danger of early exposure to peer pressure, bullying, and the use of drugs without family context or support.

\*see Frieda Ryan report, supporting documents

On 17<sup>th</sup> June 2018, Minister Bruton announced Ring Fence funding for island post primary schools in the Gaeltacht. He said 'I have set the ambition to make island education and training service the best in Europe by 2026. I am acutely aware of the challenging environment in which island post primary schools operate, which is why as part of our policy, on Gaeltacht education, we are supporting these schools with additional resources, to meet their unique circumstances.' This should apply to all island communities who face the same challenges.

Minister O'Sullivan said:

*"In many parts of our country, small schools play a central part of local communities. As someone who attended a small school myself, I am particularly conscious of the importance of this social infrastructure to rural communities, and particularly the most isolated communities". The Minister is also committed to preserving **parental choice** and recognises the need to sustain local communities, particularly dispersed and remote communities, who have close affinity to, and identity with, their local schools."* \*

Reference:

\*[https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint\\_committee\\_on\\_education\\_and\\_skills/reports/2018/2018-02-27\\_report-on-challenges-facing-island-schools\\_en.pdf](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint_committee_on_education_and_skills/reports/2018/2018-02-27_report-on-challenges-facing-island-schools_en.pdf)

## 6 Inishbofin National School

Currently the school has 2 teachers and a part time resource teacher, and one SNA. It has DEIS status.

13 children currently attend, in 2 classrooms.

11 children attend post primary schools in Clifden, Westport, Galway and Limerick.

### 6.1 Prospective Pupils for a secondary school, children currently living on Inishbofin

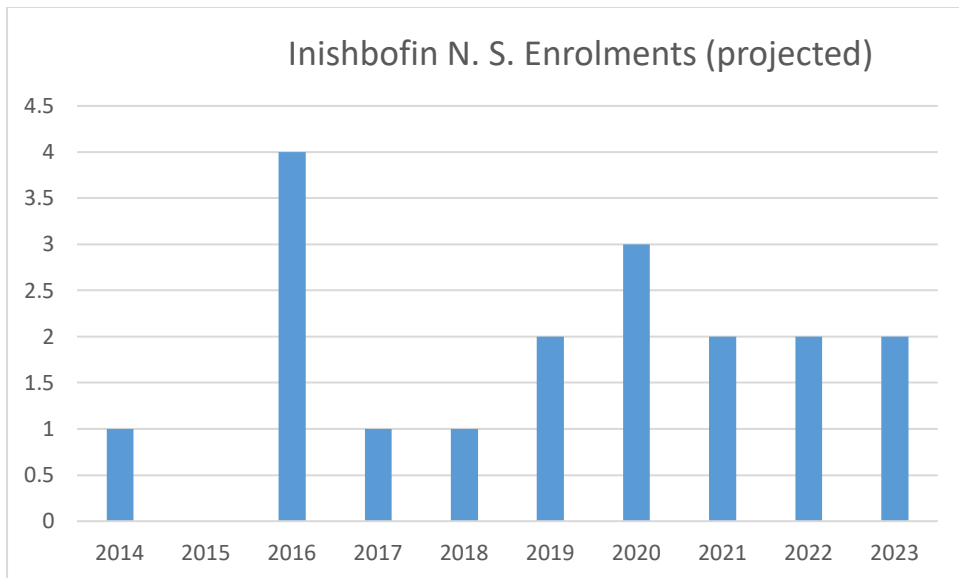
#### **National School**

6 <sup>th</sup> Class:	3 students
5 <sup>th</sup> Class:	0 students
4 <sup>th</sup> Class:	2 students
3 <sup>rd</sup> Class:	0 students
2 <sup>nd</sup> Class:	4 students
1 <sup>st</sup> Class:	1 student
Senior Infants:	1 student
Junior Infants:	2 students

#### **Preschool -2020**

Preschool – 2020:	3 students
Class of 2021:	2 students
Class of 2022:	2 students
Under preschool age:	2 students

There are currently 11 children from Inishbofin attending post primary schools on the mainland  
Already 2 children currently attending first year in Clifden Community School have pledged to come back to attend second year post primary school if it was opened on Inishbofin.



## 6.2 Inishbofin National School 2006 WSE

[https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Whole-School-Evaluation-Reports-List/report1\\_13927H.htm](https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Whole-School-Evaluation-Reports-List/report1_13927H.htm)

## 6.3 Inishbofin National School 2016 (Self Evaluation Report)



School  
Self-Evaluation Repor



## 7 Proposal for a Post Primary School on Inishbofin

In order to address the island issue of lack of secondary education, unemployment and depopulation, we propose an education solution tailored to the needs of Inishbofin.

We are seeking a GRETB managed and a multidenominational Post Primary School on Inishbofin with GRETB as patron.

As Inishbofin is an English speaking island the preferred teaching medium would be through English, this will make for an easier transition from primary to post- primary for students, and this would also give us access to a wider pool of teachers with a larger range of subjects given that there is a greater percentage of teachers qualified through English.

We have 5 children ready to attend if this endeavour was to commence in September 2020, 3 children in 1<sup>st</sup> year and 2 children 2<sup>nd</sup> year.

We request GRETB to engage with DES to seek sanction for same.

### 7.1 How will it work?

We envisage a facility being established at first perhaps on a pilot basis which would deliver, at minimum, the Junior Cycle curriculum through a combination of direct teacher input for most core subjects and peripatetic teachers for some subjects. The possibility of E-learning learning should also be considered. Inishbofin has excellent broadband infrastructure.

We have been in consultation with Inishbofin Development Company regarding the use of the community centre as a base for the school

A local hotel has offered to provide facilities for Home Economics, and a parent has offered a premises for use for practical subjects such as woodwork/metalwork.

To allow for the unpredictability of weather, and the possibility that visiting teachers may not be able to travel to the island on specified dates, there must be flexibility in timetabling. This works well on Inis Oirr where they change the timetable to accommodate such events. This is what life on islands is like.

To keep enrolment numbers up, it is envisaged that the school and island will try to attract some students from outside of the island. The fact that teaching will be done through English may be an advantage for overseas students wishing to improve their English.

There are some islanders with very young children who have expressed an interest in returning if children could be educated up to Junior Cycle and possibly up to Leaving Certificate. This could re vitalise this island whose population is steadily declining.

There are many Irish visitors to Inishbofin whose love of the island may entice them to move here also.

## 8 Support for proposal

- We have received **unanimous** support from parents of all children 0-13 years and the wider community of Inishbofin. \*
- Letters of support from Principals of the 2 secondary schools on the Aran islands\*
- Letter of support from Inishbofin Development Co. Ltd, offering the community centre as a possible location for the school. \*
- Letter of support from Eamon O’Cuiv TD. \*
- Marguerita Cooley, psychologist report \*
  
- According to Comhdhail Oileain na hEireann, in their 2020 general election pledge of support for Ireland’s offshore islands ‘Comhdhail pledges to use their electoral mandate and wherever possible, legislative power to support policies, to encourage people to live and work on offshore islands, and to ensure that offshore island residents get equal access to services and investment.’ \*

\*See supporting documents

### 8.1 Education on other Islands in Ireland

At present 5 offshore islands have post primary schools, all of these are on Gaeltacht islands:

2 in Co. Donegal: Árainn Mhór, Toraigh

3 in County Galway: Árainn, Inis Meáin, Inis Oírr

There are 36 people employed in the three Aran Islands' Post-primary schools (approximately 24 whole time equivalents), teachers, caretakers, administrative assistants, SNAs.

Statistics show that the islands with post primary schools have bucked the trend of depopulation, e.g. Inis Meáin, Inis Oírr whereas in those without secondary schools the population is in steady decline. Islands with Post-primary provision have fared much better as students living within their communities until age 18 or 19 have a much stronger sense of place and identity with the island as home e.g. Inis Meáin and Inis Oírr (pop 1926- 409, 1976- 257, 2016 -281) \*

Inishbofin is the only offshore island in County Galway with no post primary school. Government policy of forced emigration of Inishbofin aged 12 years has ensured that relatively few of these children ever return as permanent island dwellers having been gone for 10 years of school and college throughout their formative years. The proportion of its population who have no formal education or primary education only (33%) is considerably higher than the national average of 15%

\*Reference:

**GRETB Daonra Oileáin na hÉireann**

See supporting Documents.



## 8.2 Lessons to be learned from the Scottish Islands

In Scotland Island Education is a partnership arrangement between the government The Department of Education and Island Councils in a collaborative relationship to deliver the key challenges facing education provision especially in rural and island communities. This includes common work plan for early intervention, early year collaborative development to enhance a young workforce and provide equality of opportunity and choice through enhanced learning. (Empowering Scottish Island Communities, 2016, Gov. Paper)

We consulted with **Theona Morrison of Smart Islands in Scotland and Ireland: Supporting Enterprises and Young People** funded by LEADER, DCHG, Pobal

This transnational project brings together island communities in Scotland (especially Uist in the Outer Hebrides) and Ireland (off Donegal, Mayo, Galway and West Cork) to share and develop experiences and methodologies that can make their islands smart, dynamic and sustainable. The project focuses in particular on the critical role of young people returning, settling or staying on island communities, and the contribution they can make to reviving these remote communities.

Theona told us the situation in the Outer Hebrides:

*“The curriculum was still heavily weighted towards Higher Education which in actuality meant it was an education for export provision. The common view was that ‘to get on (in life) was to get off’ (the islands). This meant the islands were losing many of its school leavers. Research carried out by the Education Business Partnership revealed that many islanders would really like to return providing there were the jobs and that they had the appropriate skills to enable them to return for the jobs.”*

They now focus on what jobs are suitable for islands and how best to train the workforce for employment on the islands.

Reference:

<http://codel.scot/codel-2019/wp-content/uploads//2019/08/Young-Uibhisteach-REPORT-APRIL-2019.pdf>

This is very relevant to Inishbofin. In November 2 Inishbofin islanders spent a week on the Smart Islands project in Galway in November 2019, where secondary school education was discussed. Islanders unanimously agreed that the provision of a secondary school had revitalised their island communities. The community of Inishbofin is excited to be hosting SMART islands in March 2020. Education will be a major issue.

References:

1. An overview of the island based secondary schools and what it meant for pupils by Theona Morrison\*\*
2. An overview of the educational achievement following the introduction of qualifications linked to the local economy which had parity of esteem with conventional qualifications. \*\*
3. Attainment levels\*\*
4. CoDel's Young Uibhisteach (young economically active returners to Uist) \*\*
5. School leavers Voc Ed qualifications

\*\* see supporting documentation

## 8.3 International reference to island education

### 8.3.1 European Educational Research

*“Demographic drivers such as birth rates and ageing population are examined. This island’s experience is as an example of the ‘new mosaic of rural regions’ in Europe, where communal sustainability, viability and vitality often hinges on the attractiveness of a particular living space. While perceived “attractive” environments may drive immigration, the absence of a primary school would diminish the attractiveness of an island as a place for young families.”*

Reference:

Gill, P.E. and Kelly, G. (2016) “Case-study of how an island school contributes to communal sustainability, viability and vitality” Paper presented to Network 14 – rural schools as hubs for the Socio-Educational Development of the Community European Educational Research Conference <https://www.eera-ecer.de/ecer-programmes/conference/21/contribution/39398/>

### 8.3.2 European Small Islands Network (ESIN)

The European Small Islands Network [ESIN](#) “is the voice of 359,357 islanders on 1,640 small islands”, including in Ireland via Comhdhail Oileain na hEireann (Irish Islands Federation), [www.oileain.ie](http://www.oileain.ie), the representative organisation of inhabited offshore islands of Ireland.

A 2007 ESIN publication, Meeting the Challenges of Small Islands 20 reviewed challenges and best practice facing islands under 18 themes, including education. On each theme, current challenges, examples of good practice, and success factors were identified.

In relation to island education it is clear that many issues facing Ireland’s island schools are common to other European islands. The Report notes that:

*“...overall sustainability is dependent upon having access to schools in order to maintain populations as well as attract newcomers. In micro-communities such as islands, the school functions as one of the most important social, cultural and community institutions in addition to its educational role.”* (ESIN, 2007, p. 36).

Success factors were:

- “Small island schools are crucial for maintaining populations as well as attracting newcomers;
- Island schools have significant, multi-faceted roles, and are more than just educational facilities
- Island pupils continue to attain high standards of achievement
- Networks enable teachers to develop pedagogical methods and tools, whilst providing support for existing members as well as new island teachers
- Provision of second level education on small islands is possible by using innovative models.

Reference:

**Houses of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Skills Report on Challenges Facing Island Schools.”**

[https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint\\_committee\\_on\\_education\\_and\\_skills/reports/2018/2018-02-27\\_report-on-challenges-facing-island-schools\\_en.pdf](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint_committee_on_education_and_skills/reports/2018/2018-02-27_report-on-challenges-facing-island-schools_en.pdf)

## 8.4 Economic /Financial argument for a post primary school on Inishbofin

During last 20 years or so DES has paid €50,000 - €100,000 per year i.e. a total of €1,000,000 - €2,000,000 in **Remote Areas Grants** to fund the education emigration of all students aged 12-19 from Inishbofin to attend schools elsewhere in Ireland, whether boarding schools in Limerick or schools in Co Galway or Co Mayo, where students stay in lodgings. This €1 - €2m would have paid for a post-primary school's capital cost, and the same logic applies to the next 20 years, i.e. 2000-2040 up to €4m will be spent to (unnecessarily) remove students aged 12-19 from Inishbofin

The potential benefit of a secondary school to the island economy cannot be overlooked. The provision of secondary education at home means that individual talent and potential can be spotted and nurtured from an early age, allowing students to develop appropriate skills and training to develop jobs or businesses tailored to island life if they wish. e.g. there is a high unemployment rate but a shortage of skilled tradespeople on Inishbofin. Having more students, families and education staff living on the island, as well as employment of locals in other school jobs would bring its own economic benefits.

*“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.”\**

*“The State needs to positively discriminate in favour of island schools because of their unique geographical, cultural and societal context.”\**

*“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”\**

Reference:

\*Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) Submission to the Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills: Challenges facing post-primary schools on off-shore islands (p102, p107)

## 8.5 State Obligation

**Lisbon Treaty Article (174):** Each European member State, **including Ireland** has obligations to implement **Island Specific Arrangements** under Cohesion and Structural Policies and appropriate relevant funds, to allow Offshore Island dwellers have additional and special funding and policy Island specific initiatives in all areas of Government policy, including Education, to remove disadvantage and or to ensure that island dwellers particularly children face conditions no less favourable than other residents of the country. Ireland has not been making island Communities aware of these opportunities and obligations.

Notwithstanding this these are obligations binding on Irish Government and if not honoured, can be pursued and vindicated through European Parliament. Where else in Ireland must every child leave home and emigrate aged 12 years, not because parental choice, but of necessity to access compulsory education? Having regard to the State's failure to provide for compulsory education for the children of Inishbofin, which is enshrined in Bunreacht na hÉireann /The Irish Constitution (1937), as a similar right which has been effectively discharged by the State regarding all other children. This is not in keeping with the 1916 Forógra na Saoirse (Proclamation), insisting that all the Nation's Children shall be cherished equally. While the Proclamation itself may not have been legally binding in the way that the 1937 Constitution is binding, in 2016, Rialtas na hÉireann gave every school in Ireland (including Inishbofin Primary School) a copy of the Proclamation and an Irish Flag at a grand ceremony in Croke

Park, insisting that the values espoused in the Proclamation were the Government's values which would be reflected in Government actions, policy, programmes and priorities.

### **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states**

*"The child should grow up in a **family environment** and be fully prepared for living an individual life in society"*

The consequences of the Government policy regarding Inishbofin post-primary education (i.e. lack thereof), have assisted in making the island ever more unsustainable, and have perpetuated progressive impoverishment and incremental depopulation. If the €1-2m had been invested in Inishbofin with employment for 3-6 teachers then the island may well have had a different narrative regarding population trends, as did actually occur in Inis Meáin and Inis Oírr since (Island population stats); There are 36 people employed in the three Aran Islands' Post-primary schools (approximately 24 whole time equivalents), teachers, caretakers, administrative assistants, SNAs.

**Irish Government Policy of Closing Blasket Islands Primary school in 1941**, led to complete evacuation and desolation for that island in 1953, an island internationally respected and renowned for cultural heritage and wealth of language etc. Similar policy regarding Sherkin Island, Co Cork, in 2016 when the Irish government closed the only primary school on the island, making living on Sherkin island an impossible prospect for families with children. As many as 20 island schools have been closed in Ireland since 1950 and many of these islands have become subsequently denuded of permanent dwellers and are now deserted and fully depopulated. Is lack of Islands' policy in itself a policy of depopulation??

### **The Irish government has demonstrated its willingness to meet its obligations in recent publications:**

- **26 June, 2019 - Ministers McHugh and Ring hosted Consultation Symposium on sustaining small schools** where Minister Ring said:

"The small schools of Ireland, in particular in rural areas, are a focal point for communities. Small rural schools play an essential role in sustaining populations and encouraging families to live in rural areas. ***In planning for the future sustainability of our rural communities, schools are a key element.*** \*

- **Dáil Éireann debate - Tuesday, 3 Mar 2015**

Although dated 2013, the Review (which was commissioned in 2010) was not published until 2015. In a reply to a PQ in March 2015, the then Minister for Education Jan O'Sullivan T.D. stated that she did not agree with the Report's recommendations:

*"I consider that the report of the value for money review of small primary schools provides a solid research basis for future discussions regarding small schools. It outlines the number, type and location of small schools and this information is very useful in considering any re-organisation proposals. In many parts of our country, small schools play a central part in local communities, particularly in the case of remote and isolated communities. I do not agree with the report's recommendations because they do not have sufficient regard to the question of a school's role in community sustainability."*<sup>8</sup> (Emphasis added by L&RS) \*\*

Reference:

**Minister Bruton announces ring-fenced funding for island post-primary schools in the Gaeltacht**

\*<https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2018-press-releases/PR18-06-17.html>

[\\*\\*https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2015-03-03/9/#s11](https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2015-03-03/9/#s11)

## 8.6 Oireachtas Joint Committee Report

### **Fiona O'Loughlin T.D.**

*"it is absolutely clear that the island schools face a unique set of challenges and any additional support needed to support their essential work should be made available."*

### **Senator Trevor Ó Clochartaigh (IND)**

*"Island schools have a unique and crucial role in maintaining the fabric of their communities. The retention of vibrant school communities with appropriate resources is essential to maintaining the overall sustainability of our offshore islands. These islands are a very important part of our rich heritage and culture and are rightly promoted as an important asset for us as a nation"\**

### **DEIS Status: The vision for DEIS, as set out in the DEIS Plan 2017 is (as Inishbofin N.S. has DEIS status)**

*"Education to more fully become a proven pathway to better opportunities for those in communities at risk of disadvantage and social exclusion."\**

Reference:

**\*Houses of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Skills Report on Challenges Facing Island Schools."**

[https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint\\_committee\\_on\\_education\\_and\\_skills/reports/2018/2018-02-27\\_report-on-challenges-facing-island-schools\\_en.pdf](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint_committee_on_education_and_skills/reports/2018/2018-02-27_report-on-challenges-facing-island-schools_en.pdf)

## 8.7 Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

**DCHG Islands Consultation process** is currently underway, the first in 23 years. Launched by the Minister of State for the Irish Language, the Gaeltacht and the Islands, Seán Kyne on Sherkin island in November 2019, to formulate a new national policy for the islands, to ensure long term sustainability of the islands. It states *"the central objective of DHCG to ensure that sustainable vibrant communities continue to live on the islands.... future development and sustainability of our island communities"*

While the community of Inishbofin welcomes this development, we hope it has not too come late for our island community.

Reference:

<https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2019/12/2019-islands-policy-consultation-paper.pdf>

[https://www.merrionstreet.ie/en/News-Room/Releases/Tanaiste and Minister Kyne kick start public consultation process for new national policy on our offshore islands.html](https://www.merrionstreet.ie/en/News-Room/Releases/Tanaiste_and_Minister_Kyne_kick_start_public_consultation_process_for_new_national_policy_on_our_offshore_islands.html)

## 8.8 Department of Education and Skills

Minister McHugh said: “Small schools can and do provide an excellent education to our children, right in the heart of their communities. I went to a small school as a child. I live in an area where small schools are a facet of life and that is replicated up and down the country. They are often the heartbeat and lifeblood of a community.

“Almost half of our schools are small schools, and almost 15 per cent of our children attend one. The Government is committed to supporting and strengthening these schools, to ensure their long-term sustainability. “Ní neart go cur le chéile – we need to work together to find new ways of supporting small schools.”

Reference:

**DES Symposium supporting small schools (2019);**

<https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2019-press-releases/PR19-06-26.html>

## 8.9 Teacher’s Union of Ireland (TUI)

*“Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds living at a distance from higher education institutions, who do not have the option to commute, are faced with more complex decision-making around participation.”*

Reference:

**Teachers’ Union of Ireland (TUI) response to the establishment of an interdepartmental committee for island development. (August 2019)**

<https://www.tui.ie/fileupload/TUI%20submission%20to%20DCHG%20on%20Dev%20of%20Island%20Communities.docx>

## 9 Conclusion

On Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2015, Deputy Sean Kyne, posed a question to the Minister of Education and Skills. Considering that there are five second level island schools nationwide, operated by the Education and Training Boards, he indicated that changes would not be financially draining, which supports our belief that this makes financial sense.

Currently, Inishbofin is the only island in County Galway without a post primary school and the only English speaking island. Seeing how fellow Galway Islands are benefitting and thriving, due in a large part to their having a post primary school, we should have equal opportunities for our island. The Irish State has an obligation to provide accessible education for ALL island children. Currently, it is not meeting this obligation.

We know from other islands that a secondary school brings many socio-economic benefits and is vital to the long term sustainability of the island.

We have 5 pupils committed to enrolling in 2020 and more to follow. Tory island only has 6 children in the whole school. We want our own children to thrive and prosper in their own homes and community, while respecting their unique island identity.

The time is right. We have identified at least one possible premises to house the school and we have the pupils and unanimous island approval which is what we need for this project to go ahead. It may be several years before this opportunity arises again. Now is the time to take this important step forward to secure a vibrant and sustainable future for Inishbofin island.

We would like to ensure that educational policy would embrace the diversity of island schools

*“Many of the submissions received by the Committee as part of this process showed that there is a consistent lack of recognition of the particular needs and circumstances facing island schools. Budgetary decisions are taken, policies are implemented and other changes are made without sufficient attention being given to how these decisions will impact island schools. The role that island schools play in their communities is highly important and the challenges they face are currently not being addressed properly”\**

*“At the outset, may I thank the members and indeed non-members for their interest in the area of Island Education. **It is without doubt, an equality issue** and I'm pleased to hear that Mr Byrne, TD has undertaken to devise a policy for Island Education. This is, I believe, the only way that matters can progress and improve.”\*\**

Reference:

\* Joint Committee on Education and Skills: Report on Challenges Facing Island Schools (p22)

\*\* **Follow up submission to the joint Committee on Education and Skills on 19th December 2017** by Anne McHugh, Prfomhfheidhmeannach, Bord Oideachais agus Oiliuna Dhun na nGall

## 10 Appendices

### 10.1 Appendix A – Submission timeline

#### **Details of our current submission timeline**

1. 23rd of May 2019 Meeting with Tomás Mac Pháidín, Stiúrthóir Scoileanna GRETB and Community Development Officer
2. Two Inishbofin islanders spent a week on the Smart Islands project in Galway in November 2019 where secondary education on islands was one topic discussed and the Scottish system described
3. Public meeting with GRETAB, scheduled for November was cancelled due to bad weather
4. Rescheduled meeting – on 17th of January 2020 there was a public meeting with Tomás Mac Pháidín of GRETB and Brid Ni Dhonnacha Principal of Inis Oirr Secondary School to explore the possibility of a Secondary school on Inishbofin. This was well attended
5. 24th January 2020 Acting Principal of Inishbofin National School, three parents and five children visited Inis Oirr post primary school to see what an island school is like and learn from staff how the school has improved the quality of life on the islands. This was a very positive experience.
6. 26th of January 2020 meeting with all parents with children from 0- 13 years. This was to gather information and to confirm as to whether there was full support to send their children to a secondary school on Inishbofin. We all agreed to continue with the endeavour.
7. 1st February 2020 meeting with working group to gather information for proposal
8. 3rd February 2020 meeting with working group to draw up proposal to GRETB
9. 4th February 2020 meeting with working to compile additional information for proposal.



## 10.2 Appendix B – List of signatories

From all the parents of the children currently attending national school and pre-school on Inishbofin and other community members who have stated they will all support a post primary school on the island.

Claire Walsh

John Day

Patricia Concannon

Enda Concannon

Jackie Jefferson

Pat Coyne

Celine McCormack

Ronan Coyne

Annie Aspenwall

Caroline Concannon

Dermot Concannon

Enya Day

Pat Concannon

Nikola Concannon

Kartika Menon

Austin Coyne

Tara McMahan

Hugh McMahan

Gemma Alexis

Daren Alexis

Adrian Herlihy

Orla Day

Emily Lavelle

Oisín Lavelle

Mary Day Lavelle

Frances Coyne

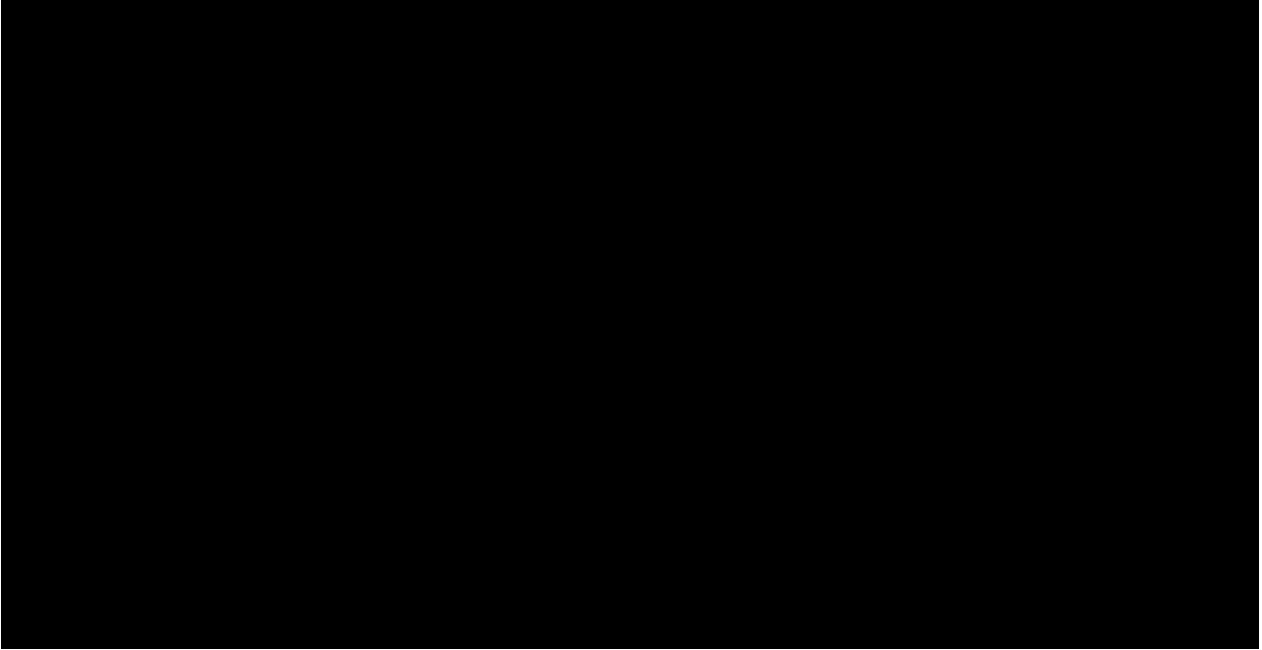
John Michael Coyne

Simon Murray

Mary Ward

### 10.3 Appendix C – Steering Group Signatures

#### **List of signatories of Inishbofin Community Post-Primary Steering Group**



**SUBMISSION TO GRETB FOR A POST PRIMARY SCHOOL ON  
INISHBOFIN ISLAND, CO. GALWAY.**

**(Supplementary Information)**

**27th February 2020**

**by**

**“Inishbofin Community Post-Primary Steering Group”**

[www.inishbofin.com](http://www.inishbofin.com)

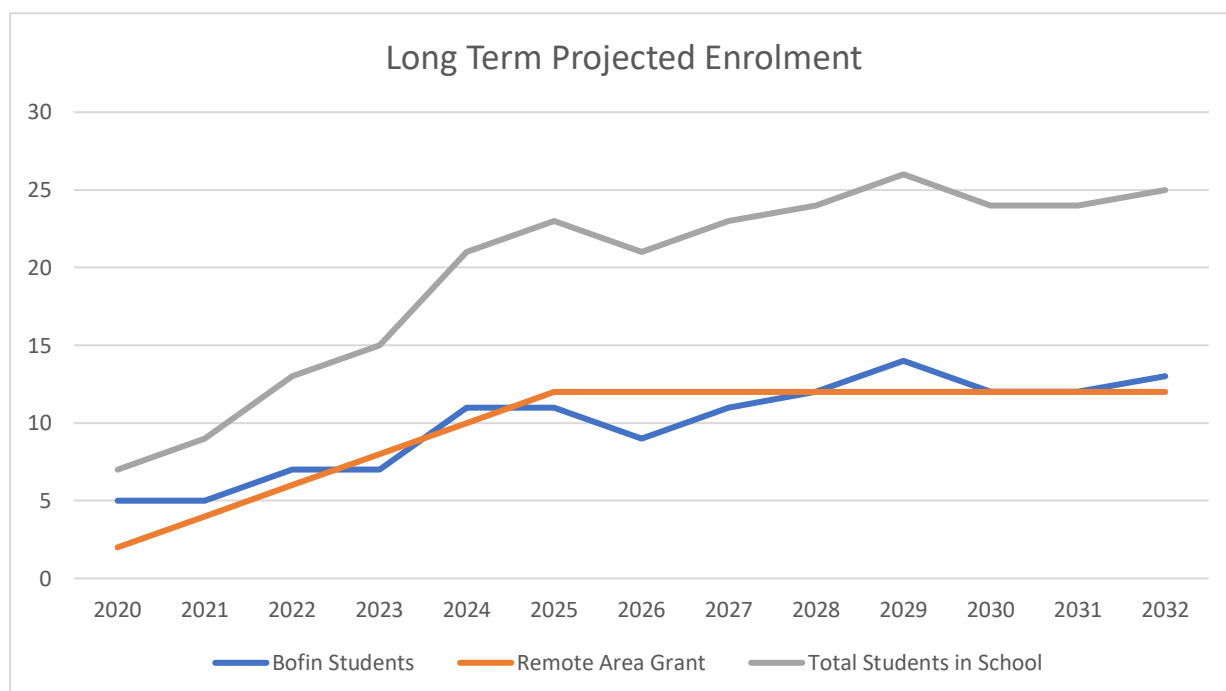
## 1. Projected enrolment for next 13 years

Below is a projected enrolments form the next 13 years using a 6 year rolling window. Assuming a transition year

- The “Inishbofin Students” column is the current primary school enrolment.
- The Remote area grant is a grant system already in place. Using the Aran island as a gauge we could potentially get 2 students per year through this scheme
- The graph shown the cumulative students. (i.e. the number of Inishbofin students and Remote area grant students in the school per year)

**Note:** We have examined the CSO statistics and found that it is not up to date we have included below more recent figures based on national school enrolments.

Year	Bofin Students	Remote Area Grant	Total Students in School
2020	5	2	7
2021	5	4	9
2022	7	6	13
2023	7	8	15
2024	11	10	21
2025	11	12	23
2026	9	12	21
2027	11	12	23
2028	12	12	24
2029	14	12	26
2030	12	12	24
2031	12	12	24
2032	13	12	25



## 2. Other potential sources of students

### 2.1 Families with connection to Inishbofin

There is also potential for the secondary school to attract children from families with connection to Inishbofin like families who own property or visit on a regular basis which would be 33 properties.

### 2.2 Expats

Government policy of forced emigration of Inishbofin aged 12 years has ensured that relatively few of these children ever return as permanent island dwellers having been gone for 10 years of school and college throughout their formative years. Islands with Post-primary provision have fared much better as students living within their communities until age 18 or 19 have a much stronger sense of place and identity with the island as home

There is a sizable number of expats that could possibly return with their families. There is a potential here of approx. 100 individuals / families with approx. 60 children

### 2.3 Remote Area Grant

Other children in Ireland can get a remote area grant. These children can choose any school in Ireland, so there is a potential, with the correct advertising and promotion for students to choose Inishbofin post primary school. There is a potential of 2 extra students here

During last 20 years or so DES has paid €50,000 - €100,000 per year i.e. a total of €1,000,000 - €2,000,000 in **Remote Areas Grants** to fund the Education Emigration of all students aged 12-19 from Inishbofin to attend schools elsewhere in Ireland, whether boarding schools or schools in Co Galway or Co Mayo, where students stay in lodgings.

This €1 - €2m would have paid for a post-primary school's capital cost, and the same logic applies to next 20 years, i.e. 2000-2040 up to €4m will be spent to (unnecessarily) remove students aged 12-19 from Inishbofin;

### 2.4 Tourism

Approximately 40,000 tourists visit Inishbofin every year. This had attracted families to the island over the years. For example three families moved to Inishbofin in the last 10 years knowing that they would have to leave when their children reached the age for secondary school, they would have stayed had there been a secondary school on Inishbofin, and these figures can be viewed on the primary school enrolments.

### 2.5 Political

Speaking to politicians during the process they have proposed scholarship grant scheme in the region of up to 10 additional students over a period.

### 3. Educational Attainment

Reports undertaken in similar remote areas of Norway, Donegal and Scotland show the benefits and positive impacts that post primary schools have on rural community. They also show the struggles that these schools have had to go through in order to survive. They indicate that communities are thriving and attracting newcomers as a result of these schools. They also indicate that the results of pupils in these small rural schools are better than those in large schools. We believe that if this endeavour goes ahead it would be of huge benefit to our children and our Island community.

We noticed that many of the social issues that the Scottish Islands highlighted could be counteracted by decent education, and thriving communities.

Reference:

Norway

<https://europeansmallislands.com/2016/12/04/small-island-schools-perform-well/>

Donegal

<https://europeansmallislands.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/donegal-islands-survival-plan.pdf>

Scotland

<https://www.scottish-islands-federation.co.uk/category/social-issues/>

### 4. Correspondence

We have written to all the Galway Councillors and TD's as well as relevant government departments and organisations, we are still awaiting on their formal responses. Those that we have spoken to are very much in favour of the proposal. We will forward on the responses to GRETB as they arrive.