

RURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This Rural Impact Assessment has been prepared on a proposal to discontinue education provision at Dalwhinnie Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Newtonmore Primary School.

Details of Consultation to be Carried Out:

The Proposal will be the subject of statutory consultation from under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.

In accordance with statutory requirements, the following will be consulted:

- (i) Parents of pupils in the catchment areas of Dalwhinnie Primary School, Gergask Primary School and Newtonmore Primary School, including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (ii) All P4-7 pupils attending Gergask and Newtonmore Primary Schools.
- (iii) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal;
- (iv) The Parent Councils of Gergask and Newtonmore Primary Schools, and the local Comann nam Pàrant.
- (v) Staff of Gergask and Newtonmore Primary Schools.
- (vi) Trade union representatives;
- (vii) The community councils for the areas covered by the 3 schools;
- (viii) Education Scotland;
- (ix) Highland Youth Convenor
- (x) Bòrd Na Gàidhlig
- (xi) Laggan Community Association.
- (xiii) Members of the Highland Community Planning Partnership

The proposal document will also be advertised on the Highland Council website.

A public meeting will be held in Dalwhinnie on 23 February 2016. This meeting will be advertised in advance in the local press and on the Highland Council Facebook page.

Describe what the change will mean in rural communities

Although the proposal involves a formal closure of service, the service itself has not operated since the summer of 2012. In practical terms the proposal will not change the current position.

The relocation of service (which in practical terms has already taken place) involves moving local school provision from Dalwhinnie to Newtonmore.

Dalwhinnie School was mothballed when the pupil roll fell to 2. The Highland Council believes that educational benefits arise when schools have a sufficient

number of children to allow pupils to work collaboratively and participate in team sports and wider activities; and where there are age appropriate peer groups of a sufficient size to allow a range of interactions and relationships to form and reform.

How will people in rural communities be affected?

Accessibility of service – since the “mothballing” of Dalwhinnie Primary School pupils of P1-7 age from the Dalwhinnie catchment have been provided with free school transport to Newtonmore Primary School. The “mothballing” has meant reduced accessibility of service for parents of pre-school children, who are required to transport their children to Newtonmore or Gergask. It is also recognised that pupils from Dalwhinnie have less opportunity to walk or cycle to school than when the village school was in operation, and that there is occasional inconvenience for parents who wish to take their child to or from school during the school day.

Travel time to the service – The additional travel time for school pupils is 19 minutes to Newtonmore - 10.9 miles or 14 minutes to Gergask – 8.1 miles.

Cost to access the service – Parents of children aged 3 and 4 years have additional costs to access pre-school education and childcare, although this has been the case since the school was mothballed in 2012. These costs must be set against the educational benefits that would accrue from the merger.

Fuel poverty – The proposal will not have any impact on fuel poverty.

Economic impact – As the school has been mothballed since 2012, formal closure will not affect local employment patterns. The building is not currently used by the community.

Partner service delivery – the concentration of service in Newtonmore provides opportunities for improved partner service delivery to children, through reduced duplication of work and time spent travelling, and reduced costs. Since the change has in practical terms already been implemented, there is no need to consult other partners.

Other options or adjustments

The above do not apply in the circumstances of a change already implemented for practical purposes.