

RURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

The Assessment is current prior to public consultation but may be amended in the light of comments received during the course of that consultation.

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 Inverasdale Primary School and Poolewe Primary School, including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (ii) All P4-7 pupils attending Poolewe Primary School.
- (iii) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal;
- (iv) The Parent Council of Poolewe Primary School.
- (v) Staff of Poolewe Primary School.
- (vi) Trade union representatives;
- (vii) The community councils for the areas covered by the 2 schools;
- (viii) Education Scotland;
- (ix) Highland Youth Convenor
- (x) Russian Arctic Convoy Museum
- (xi) Inverasdale Heritage Group
- (xii) Wester Loch Ewe Trust
- (xiii) GBB Estates (local landowner)
- (xiv) "Good for Ewe" community co-operative

The proposal document will also be advertised in the local press and on the Highland Council website.

A public meeting will be held in Inverasdale School on 10 June 2015. This meeting will be advertised in advance in the local press and on the Highland Council website.

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 Inverasdale to Poolewe, a distance of 5.4 miles.

Inverasdale School was mothballed when the pupil roll fell to 2. Were Inverasdale School to re-open with 100% of catchment pupils attending the school, the roll figures for the forthcoming few years would be 2015-16 – 8; 2016-17 – 4; 2017-18 – 3; 2018-19 – 5.

At present Poolewe Primary School has a pupil roll of less than 50% of the school's capacity. The school is comfortably able to accommodate the pupils from Inverasdale and no adverse effects for Poolewe Primary are expected to arise. On the contrary, including the pupils from Inverasdale within the Poolewe catchment will help to maintain a healthy roll at Poolewe.

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 Inverasdale Primary School pupils of P1-7 age from the Inverasdale catchment have been provided with free school transport to Poolewe Primary School.

Currently there are 4 pre-school children within the Inverasdale School catchment. However pre-school children from Inverasdale have always attended nursery at Poolewe Primary, so the closure of Inverasdale School would have no impact on pre-school children.

It is recognised that pupils from Inverasdale have less opportunity to walk or cycle to school than when Inverasdale 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 maximum additional travel time for school pupils is 21 minutes.

Cost to access the service – Free school transport to Poolewe Primary will be provided for the P1-7 age group. Since pre-school children from Inverasdale have always attended nursery at Poolewe Primary, the closure of Inverasdale School would not result in any additional costs to this group of parents.

Economic impact – when the school ceased to operate in 2012, there were some negative impacts in respect of the loss of part-time employment opportunities such as school clerical and cleaning staff.

Conversely, since the school was mothballed the community have used it as a location for an exhibition into the history of the school, run by the Inverasdale

Heritage Group who created a tearoom alongside the exhibition. The school has also been used for an exhibition into the Russian Arctic Convoys of WWII. Mothballing the school has therefore allowed the creation of a local visitor attraction, stimulating tourism. This has had a positive economic impact.

Partner service delivery – the concentration of service in Poolewe 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.